Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates

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The Eternal Way

THE DEEP SILENCE

Only a perception of the sacred, of that which evokes a response of reverent regard, can satisfy the soul and thereby enrich our lives. Without it, though we might possess everything else a person could want in this world, in our quiet moments alone with our thoughts, we know that our lives are barren.

Light Through the Ages

THE SHIVA SAMHITA

An examination of an ancient text on yoga philosophy and practice, with commentary. Conclusion.

Dialogue

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

Open discussion. Reader participation invited.

Addendum

Kriya initiation schedules and pilgrimage to India.

Embodied souls with awareness clouded by the influences of the gunas [attributes of nature], do not apprehend the all-pervading, eternal Consciousness which transcends them.

Bhagavad Gita 7.13

When you understand the truth of suffering: its cause, its remedy, and [the means] of its cessation, the four noble truths will be comprehended; you will walk the right path. Right views will be the torch that lights your way. Right aspirations will be your guide. Right speech will be your dwelling place on life's road. Your way will be straight, for it is right behavior. Your nourishment will be the right means of earning your livelihood. Right endeavors will be your steps. Right thoughts will be your breath. Right contemplation will provide you with abiding peace.

– *Teachings of Gautama, the Buddha*

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The Deep Silence That Refreshes the Mind and Spirit

My guru, Paramahansa Yogananda often proclaimed, "He is wisest who seeks [to know] God; he is the most successful who has realized God."

While endeavoring to apprehend the wholeness of life, we need not withdraw from the world which is included in that wholeness. We need only be selective; choosing that which is pure and which enhances our lives while refraining from what troubles the mind, blurs perceptions, and may contribute to misfortune.

Ordinary self-conscious awareness is clouded, distorted, and fragmented because of an almost ceaseless stream of impulses arising from subliminal levels of the mind. These influential impulses arise because of restlessness, discontent, subconscious conflicts, and the force of instinctual urges and tendencies. Of these, restlessness and discontent are more easily remedied. Subconscious conflicts may be more difficult to resolve. Instinctual urges and tendencies to satisfy physical and emotional urges can be disciplined by mastery of attention.

The most effective way to pacify restless thoughts and the subliminal drives that nourish them is to regularly practice superconscious meditation. When correctly and effectively practiced, the procedure elicits physical relaxation, emotions are calmed, thought processes are refined, the forces of subliminal drives are weakened and neutralized, and awareness becomes tranquil and clear. This tranquil, clear, superconscious state is superior to ordinary waking states, sleep states, and unconsciousness.

Preliminary meditative superconscious states may be mixed with subtle thoughts and prevailing moods, causing the meditator to wonder whether or not the predominant calm state is

really superconsciousness or merely a more refined state of ordinary awareness. With practice, one acquires the ability to observe subtle thoughts and moods with objectivity, then to banish them by a gentle act of will (an impulse of intention) or ignore them and allow them to eventually subside.

Repeated practice soon enables the alert meditator to discern (and experience) the difference between the permanent, real, pure conscious nature (the essence of Being) and the conflicted, fragmented states common to ordinary states of awareness. When this difference is recognized, by attentive practice it is possible to choose to be established in awareness of Being at all times, even when engaged in activities and relationships. Perceptions will then be more accurate; intellectual powers will be enhanced; intuition will be more reliable; and actions will be performed skillfully and effectively with less effort.

Beginning meditators are advised to remember that the primary purpose of meditation practice is to learn to discern and experience the truth of their Being; know the eight stages of preparation and practice; practice correctly until the primary purpose of meditation is accomplished.

The Eight Stages of Preparation and Practice

1. *Ethical living.* Personal conduct that produces and maintains orderly, harmonious and supportive relationships with others and the environment provides a firm foundation which supports purposeful living and spiritual growth. The five fundamental behavioral guidelines to which to conform are: harmlessness in thought and deed; truthfulness; honesty; disciplined use of the senses, thoughts, energy, and actions for entirely constructive purposes; nonaddictive, right use of material things and resources. As spiritual growth progresses, no effort is required to conform to these behaviors; they are spontaneously expressed by the innate inclinations of the soul.

2. *Adherence to practices which contribute to physical well-being, psychological transformation, and rapid spiritual growth.* Keep your

body clean and healthy. Learn to be patient and soul-satisfied in all circumstances, while doing what you can to improve, change, or transcend oppressive circumstances. To effect psychological transformation, choose to be emotionally mature by being responsible for your thoughts, moods, behaviors, actions, and the results of your actions. Study and intellectually and intuitively analyze the nature of Consciousness and its processes until you acquire insight and clearly know the facts about it, yourself, and your relationship to life. Surrender (let go of) your illusional sense of selfhood in favor of apprehending and experiencing the truth of your Being.

3. *Sitting.* In a quiet place, where you will not be disturbed, sit upright. While it is all right, when meditating, to adjust your position whenever necessary for the purpose of comfort, avoid unnecessary movements because of restlessness. Close your eyes. Gaze gently into the space between your eyebrows. Remember that the primary purpose of meditation practice is to become aware of your essential, pure conscious nature. If you pray, acknowledge God in your usual way and pray briefly to attune yourself to the reality of the Presence of God.

4. *Freeing and balancing the flows of life force in the body to elicit relaxation and calm the actions of the mind.* This can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Contemplate the chosen object of concentration or practice a meditation technique with alert attention.

5. *Internalization of attention* occurs when the meditator's awareness is completely withdrawn from the body, senses, moods, and thought processes.

6. *Concentration* on the meditation object or ideal becomes focused and sustained.

7. *Meditation.* Attention flows smoothly: intentionally directed by the meditator; spontaneously because of the attractiveness of the meditation object or ideal; or as determined by the soul's innate impulse to have its awareness restored to wholeness.

8. *Superconsciousness*: which may be experienced with the support of the meditative object or as pure existence-Being without the support of a meditative object.

Helpful Guidelines to Effective Meditation Practice

- Meditate once or twice a day on a regular schedule. Early morning after restful sleep, while thoughts and emotions are still subdued, is recommended. Early morning practice confers three practical benefits: (1) procrastination is avoided; (2) after meditation practice you will be more alert and purposeful; (3) you will be more self-confident because of knowing that you have done something to confirm your intention to live effectively. If early morning practice is not possible, any time you choose will be suitable. *Note*: For some people, who feel tired or whose awareness is blurred when they awake from sleep, early morning is not the best time for them to meditate. If physical or psychological problems contribute to early morning tiredness or inability to concentrate, actions should be implemented to resolve the problem.
- Short sessions (15 to 20 minutes) to elicit relaxation and refresh the mind and spirit are beneficial.
- Longer sessions (30 minutes to an hour) will enable you to go beyond the preliminary stages of practice and experience more refined superconscious states. If longer sessions cannot be scheduled daily, schedule them weekly, biweekly, or monthly.
- Meditate with alert attention. Avoid passive sitting, daydreaming, and sleep. Meditate with purpose. Be curious about the process. Be attentive to what you are doing and to what is occurring. Aspire to be spiritually awake. Nurture devotion to God. Let your awareness blend into and merge with formless, infinite Consciousness.
- When necessary, use a meditation technique.
- When awareness is clear and tranquil, discontinue the use of a meditation technique. Let superconsciousness spontaneously emerge.
- Ignore physical sensations, moods, memories, thoughts, and illusory meditative perceptions of all kinds.

Meditation Techniques to Learn and Skillfully Use

A technique is a procedure used to solve a problem or accomplish a purpose. Attentive practice of meditation techniques will enable you to observe, experience, and understand soul-mind-body relationships and interactions. Experiment: Before actively

engaging in meditation practice, sit quietly for several minutes. Observe your thoughts, moods, breathing pattern, and physical states. Notice the relationship between the speed and forcefulness of breathing and your thoughts, moods, and physical states. As you relax, your breathing pattern becomes slower and less forceful, thoughts are more orderly, and your emotions are calmed. You did not have to do anything to cause these effects; they occurred naturally. Likewise, when meditating, there is no need to contend with random thoughts, memories, or shifting moods. They will automatically be pacified when attention is concentrated on the purpose of your practice.

When devotion-empowered aspiration to be Self-realized is strong, a meditation technique may not be needed. Simply sitting, waiting and watching, may be sufficient. Or you can pray to be aware of the Presence of God, then patiently wait, alert and attentive, in the deep silence. Meditation may then flow smoothly. If concentration is distracted by mental or emotional states, skillful use of a suitable meditation technique can be extremely helpful.

A mantra—a word, a word-phrase, or a sound—may be used to focus attention. (Kriya yoga initiates should also practice kriya pranayama and the supplemental techniques.) For most meditators, during the early stages of practice before meditation flows spontaneously, listening to a mantra is more helpful than "waiting and observing" because it supports concentration. Until awareness without the support of an object of concentration is easy to maintain, the force of habit may incline the meditator to identify awareness with thoughts, memories, feelings, fantasies, semiconscious states of reverie, or sleep. When attention is fully identified with a mantra, because thoughts, memories, and emotions are ignored, they will diminish in intensity and eventually become dormant. When awareness is calm and tranquil, the mantra can be ignored. Superconsciousness will then prevail.

By repeated practice of meditation to the stage of tranquil

awareness of Being, superconscious states are progressively refined. Their superior influences weaken and neutralize addictive tendencies and destructive subconscious conditionings, organize mental processes, purify the intellect, and illumine the meditator's field of consciousness. In the course of time, superconsciousness blends with and transforms ordinary states of self-conscious awareness, unveiling the soul's intuitive powers and allowing cosmic consciousness—perception of the wholeness of life—to be the normal state. Although there have been instances of sudden awakening to cosmic consciousness, they are rare; it is more usual that its emergence occurs gradually.

Spiritual growth without a prosperity consciousness is not possible. Like the evidential expressions of prosperity in all other aspects of our lives, the enlargement of soul capacities can only be experienced when spiritual, mental, physical, and environmental components of life are harmoniously integrated. To become aware of and unfold our innate potential to be knowledgeable and freely functional, we have to be receptive to these ideal conditions.

Tenacious attachment to self-centered states of consciousness, delusions, illusions, and to behaviors, and personal relationships which reinforce them, interferes with spiritual growth. Egocentricity contracts and confines awareness. To experience authentic spiritual growth, awareness has to be clarified, expanded, and unconfined.

Note: This article is from a portion of the first draft of chapter four of a new book I am now writing which will be published this spring by CSA Press. The title is *The Spiritual Basis of Real Prosperity*.

The searchlight of attention is ordinarily focused on material things. When directed inward, it enables one to discern the eternal light of Spirit.
Paramahansa Yogananda

The Shiva Samhita

This treatise on yoga practice is believed to have been written more than five centuries ago. The author is unknown. *Shiva* represents Pure Consciousness, the repository of knowledge of itself. *Parvati*, the creative energy aspect of Consciousness, is portrayed as asking questions so that samadhi, the consummation of practice, can be realized. A *samhita* (Sanskrit *sam*, "to bring or put together") is a collected body of information about a chosen subject. The presentation is concise because it is presumed that the reader will be intelligent enough to understand the meaning or will have the benefit of a teacher who can explain it. I have italicized Sanskrit words only when they first appear in the text or when they are defined.

Chapter Five: Continued.

Verses 5 to 21 describe how to use one's shadow to determine fate: the results of one's thoughts and actions. The recommended method is to stand facing away from the sun or the bright moon and look steadily at one's shadow (thirty seconds is usually sufficient). Then without blinking the eyelids, look upward (straight ahead) into space. The aftereffect of having gazed at the shadow will enable one to see an image or form of the body. If the form is whole, good fortune will follow. If not, misfortune may be impending. Because these verses may have been added by someone who revised the text at a later date (the information does not seem to relate to the central theme), I have not included them.

Raja Yoga

22. The practitioner should close the ears with the thumbs, the eyes with the index fingers, the nostrils with the middle fingers, and with the two remaining fingers press together the lower and upper lips. By thus having confined the air [prana], the practitioner sees the light of the soul [in the spiritual eye].

The light seen when using this technique (*jyoti mudra*, one of the procedures taught at the time of initiation into kriya yoga

meditation practices) is the soul's life force manifested in the brain when attention is directed into the spiritual eye.

23. When this light is clearly seen, even for a moment, one becomes free from error and attains the highest end [of practice].
24. Then oblivious of his physical, subtle, and causal bodies, the yogi can awaken to Self-realization.

To say that freedom from error and the culmination of spiritual practice is accomplished when the light is seen "even for a moment" is obviously an exaggeration, perhaps to encourage the devotee to practice the technique. It is true, however, that when attention is internalized, refined superconscious states may be experienced.

25. One who practices this secretly, is [soon] absorbed in God.
26. This should be kept secret. It produces conviction and provides supreme peace. By practice, one begins to hear subtle sounds.
27. The first sound is like the hum of a honey-intoxicated bee. The next sound is that of a flute; then of a harp. After this, by gradual practice, one hears the sounds of ringing bells; then the sound of thunder. When attention is fixed on this sound, being free from fear, absorption [of awareness] in this sound is experienced.
28. When the awareness of the yogi is exceedingly engaged in this sound, external matters are forgotten.

Initiated disciples are advised to not to engage in idle talk about their spiritual practices; they are to constantly aspire to Self-realization, live with intentional purpose, and meditate. The sounds described in the text are the effects of the prana frequencies emanated from the five chakras in the spinal pathway, starting at the base chakra. These are to be used as mantras; intently listened to until the preliminary sounds are transcended and the sound of Om persists.

29. By the practice of yoga, becoming free from all modified states of mind, awareness is absorbed in the field of intelligence.

The "practice of yoga" is practice of samadhi, oneness, during which awareness is removed from mental states.

30. There is no [meditation] posture like *siddhasana*, no power like that of restraint, no mudra like *khechari*, and no absorption like that of *nada* [inner sound].

Siddhasana, the meditation posture (*asana*) of one who is intent upon being an accomplished practitioner (*siddha*) is but one of the meditation postures which may be used. It enables the meditator to sit comfortably. Restraint of sensory and mental impulses is necessary for success in meditation practice. Khechari mudra, placing the tongue up and back against the roof of the mouth is said to stabilize prana in the brain when meditating. One translation of the word is "that state accomplished when prana and attention are fully identified with the object of meditative contemplation," which is obviously more important than the position of one's tongue. After practice of preliminary meditation techniques, the final procedure is absorption of attention in inner sound along with merging of awareness with the field of pure Consciousness.

31. Now I shall explain to you the preliminary stages of freedom, which by knowing, even the most error-prone aspirant [to Self-realization] may accomplish salvation [liberation].
32. Having acknowledged God with devotion, having performed the best of the [preliminary] practices of yoga, and being in a calm state and steady posture, let the wise yogi prepare for initiation into this [raja yoga] by pleasing his guru.

Raja (royal, kingly, superior) yoga practice, is also referred to as *ashtanga* (eight-limbed) yoga, as described in Patanjali's yoga-sutras. To "please the guru" is to indicate to one's teacher (guru) by personal behavior, willingness to learn, and practice of what is learned, that one is sincere. This is the best preparation for initiation.

33. Having given all his possessions to the guru who knows yoga, and having satisfied the guru with great care, let the wise devotee receive initiation.

To "give all of one's possessions to the teacher" means to give them to God by renouncing attachments to them. Babaji told Lahiri Mahasaya, "When people ask for initiation, ask them to give you their money and their family." This was a way of saying that devotees, while being responsible for their material resources and family (and social) obligations, should not be attached to them. When the teacher is assured that the truth seeker is prepared to be a disciple, initiation can occur.

34. Having done the necessary preliminary things, let the wise devotee receive this auspicious yoga [be initiated] in my house with purity of heart.

"My house" is the field of pure Consciousness. Instruction in lifestyle regimens and meditation practices is the outer aspect of initiation; the real initiation is to bring the devotee's awareness into attunement with the Infinite.

35. Having renounced by the above methods the results of past karma, and being in his spiritual body, let the devotee receive instruction in this highest yoga.

Initiation is a "new beginning," a "second birth" into higher awareness. A degree of spiritual awareness is necessary if initiation is to be effected. One who is mind- and sense-bound is not receptive to the transmission of spiritual energies which are present during the occasion of instruction.

36. Sitting in a meditation posture, the yogi should focus attention inward to the spiritual eye [as previously described].
37. By successful accomplishment of this technique, one experiences unqualified, pure happiness; therefore, this should be done with concentrated endeavor.

38. One who thus practices obtains success, and mastery of prana, in a short duration of time.
39. The prana then enters the middle channel [in the spine].
40. One who practices this [method] with diligence experiences the unfoldment of exceptional powers of perception and can explore the three worlds at will.

Because of clarified and expanded awareness, exceptional powers of perception (siddhis) spontaneously unfold, along with perception and intuitive knowledge of the entirety of Consciousness and its processes.

41. According to the success that one has in mastering prana, mastery of the body is acquired. The wise, remaining established in spiritual awareness, then enjoy this world while in the body.

When one is Self-realized and prana flows are balanced, the body is healthy, the senses are under control, and enlightened living in this world is possible. The Self-realized person, no longer bound by karma (effects of past thoughts, reactions, and actions) lives enjoyably with insightful understanding.

Various forms of dharana [meditative contemplation]:

42. Sitting in a comfortable meditation posture, with attention directed to the throat cavity, place the tongue at the base of the palate. This practice will neutralize hunger and thirst.

This verse describes the practice of khechari mudra. When one is stable in Self-realization, the body is nourished by life force and subtle essences: a blend of consciousness and subtle matter, "the nectar of the gods."

44. Below the throat cavity is *kurma nadi*. When attention is established here, concentration is steady.

Kurma nadi is the prana channel that goes downward from the medulla oblongata to the spinal cord. Concentration at the

spiritual eye establishes life force and awareness in the higher region of the spinal pathway.

45. When the [meditating] yogi is constantly aware of the spiritual eye, fire like lightning is perceived. By contemplating this light, the mind is purified and karma is removed.
46. The experienced yogi, thus constantly aware of the spiritual eye, may see and converse with the siddhas.

The spiritual eye may be perceived as flashing lights, then as a clear, moon-like white light. It may also be seen as a golden orb with a blue center and a bright white light in the blue field. Karma is removed because of superior insights that result from clarified awareness. When exceptional powers of perception are unveiled, one may be aware of enlightened souls (siddhas) with whom telepathic or intuitive communication seems to occur. Unless the presence of enlightened souls is clearly perceived, and seems worthwhile, devotees are not advised to desire such communication. Preoccupation with such desires is a diversion from one's real purpose—to be spiritually awake and liberated.

47. The awareness of one who contemplates *sunya* (the field of pure consciousness, sometimes referred to as the "void" because of the absence of attributes) at all times becomes absorbed in it.

Our awareness identifies with that to which we direct our attention. The attention and awareness of the average person is fixated on material objects, personal relationships, physical sensations, moods, and thoughts. The yogi expresses through the mind and body, yet remains Self-aware and aware of the unbounded field of Consciousness.

48. The yogi desirous of success should obtain this knowledge. By habitual practice he becomes equal to me.

The "me" in this verse refers to pure Consciousness.

49. Having conquered all the elements, and being devoid of all hopes and worldly connections, when the yogi meditates on the spiritual eye, mental processes are pacified and the siddhi of *khechari* is obtained.

When one is no longer unduly influenced by the forces of Nature, and free from egocentric desires and addictive attachments, mental transformations cease. Because of khechari—attention being concentrated on the object of meditative contemplation—the devotee's awareness is liberated (from involvements with which it was formerly preoccupied).

50. The accomplished yogi perceives light; by concentrated practice in it he becomes the lord of the light [obtains success in working with that light].
51. Lying down, the yogi should contemplate the light. By doing so, all weariness and fatigue are removed. By contemplating at the medulla oblongata and spiritual eye, he conquers death.

Contemplation of the inner light when lying down to rest is yoga nidra, meditative superconsciousness, superior to ordinary subconscious sleep. When superconsciousness is constant, the yogi overcomes "death"—involuntary return to subconscious and unconscious states.

52. The finest essence of food transformation nourishes the subtle body. Other [gross] attributes of food nourish the physical body.
53. Unused food residue is eliminated from the body. The finest essence of food transformation flows through the nadis and nourishes the body.
54. When it flows through the nadis, the body is vitalized.

The eight stages of food transformation as described in Ayurvedic literature are plasma, blood, muscle, fat, bone, marrow, reproductive essences, and a refined essence that strengthens the body's immune system.

Verses 55 to 95 describe the five lower chakras, their locations and relationships to various levels of realization. It is explained that when the vital forces of the chakras are free-flowing, the brilliancy of the body increases; digestive fire becomes strong; one becomes free from disease; and insightfulness and omniscience follow.

96. The two-petaled chakra, *ajna*, is between the eyebrows.
97. Within it, is the eternal *bija* [seed], brilliant as a full moon. The wise devotee who knows this light is never distracted from the path.
98. By contemplation on this light, one obtains the highest success.
99. I bestow salvation. I am the state of ecstasy in the thousand petaled lotus. By contemplating this, the devotee becomes like me.

The spiritual eye is referred to as the ajna (will, command) center because from here the physical, mental, and astral (prana) forces can be regulated. It is referred to as having two petals because both ida and pingala currents are merged here. Realization of absolute Consciousness (I, "Shiva") liberates the soul. Absolute Consciousness is related to the thousand petaled (numberless rays of life force) in the higher brain, but is not confined to it. With awareness established in the crown chakra, the devotee contemplates absolute Consciousness.

100. The space between *ida* and *pingala* is *Varanasi* [the holy abode of Shiva]. There, it is said, the Lord of the universe dwells.
101. The greatness of this holy place has been declared in many scriptures by truth-perceiving sages; its secret has been eloquently expounded by them.

Between the *ida* (moon, negative current) and *pingala* (sun, positive current) in the spinal pathway is the prana channel through which life force is directed when kriya pranayama is practiced. Within this channel are three finer channels. In India, Varanasi (formerly named Banaras and referred to as *Kashi*, "the abode of light") is said to be Shiva's home, the place where absolute Consciousness is present to be experienced. Every year, millions of devout Hindus go on pilgrimage to

Varanasi. Many go there to await their time of transition, believing that to do so in that city is to be assured of liberation. Yogis know the "secret," that the abode of absolute Consciousness is within them. Their "pilgrimage" is inward and upward through the chakras to the spiritual eye and crown chakra. Tradition has it that the saint, Kabir, who lived several centuries ago in Varanasi, departed the city before leaving his body so that people would not think that he believed his liberation to be dependent upon being in the city. Lahiri Mahasaya lived in Varanasi. His residence on Chousatti Ghat Lane near the Ganges is still maintained by his descendents as a pilgrimage site for kriya devotees. Paramahansa Yogananda's first meeting with Sri Yukteswar was in Varanasi.

102. *Sushumna nadi* in the spine extends to the *Brahmarandhra.*
103. The lotus [chakra] there is *sahasrara* [thousand petaled]. In its center dwells brilliant, white light. From it, elixir [the fluid of immortality] is continually exuding.

Soul force flows into the body at the medulla oblongata at the base of the brain, then to the crown chakra and down through the five lower chakras to nourish the body. The vitalizing forces flowing from the crown chakra are said to be dissipated by excessive use of the senses, stress, worry, restlessness, and debilitating activities. Vital forces which are conserved can be transmuted for higher purposes: constructive living, creative endeavors, and spiritual practice.

The rhythms of the forces flowing through ida and pingala are mere reflections of the radiant, fiery Consciousness within sushumna.

Swami Sri Yukteswar

Dialogue

Your participation is invited. Use the form provided with each issue of *Radiance* or write a brief note to the CSA office.

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1. Where is the dorsal chakra located?

The dorsal chakra is in the region of the spine between the shoulder blades.

2. I sometimes feel pressure in the top of my head, especially when I place my tongue against my palate. This distracts me from wanting to perform my duties. What would you suggest I do to become more interested in participation in normal activities? I do not want to discontinue my spiritual practices.

Don't place the tongue against the palate. Doing this is not necessary to facilitate upward movement or stabilizing of prana in the head chakras. Try to discover the cause of the feeling of pressure in the top of the head and eliminate it if possible. Sometimes, just thinking of that region of the head can result in a sensation of pressure. As to being interested in participating in your normal duties: view them as necessary actions to perform. Consider skillful actions as part of your spiritual practice.

3. I have read that all the gurus in this kriya yoga tradition, from Babaji to Paramahansa Yogananda, are avatars. My question is: which guru should be the object of one's reverent respect?

The philosophical theory is that an avatar is a fully enlightened soul which incarnated without having had prior embodiments for the purpose of working out karma or awakening to God-realization. In India, many saintly persons who are referred to as avatars are known to have engaged in intensive spiritual

practices before awakening to God-realization. People who are amazed to see (or hear about) someone who is fully enlightened often assume that person to be an avatar. The title of "avatar" is also often used as a way to indicate special respect. Thus Paramahansaji referred to Babaji as a *maha* (great) avatar; to Lahiri Mahasaya as a *yogavatar* (incarnation of yoga); and to Sri Yukteswar as a *jnanavatar* (incarnation of knowledge-wisdom). Many members of Self-Realization Fellowship refer to Paramahansaji as a *premavatar* (incarnation of divine love). Paramahansaji said that he bestowed the titles on Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar as a way of honoring them and their works. Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar, as did my guru, engaged in spiritual practice for many years prior to their awakening (or reawakening) to Self-realization. We do not know Babaji's personal history. Often, even highly Self-realized souls experience a temporary clouding of awareness when they incarnate. Yogic rumor has it that some "avatars" can comprehend and speak all languages, their bodies do not always cast a shadow, and their feet do not always leave footprints in loose soil. I think these assertions are exaggerated attempts to set revered individuals apart from ordinary people. Without dependency on language, it is possible to discern and to communicate intentions (Patanjali's yoga-sutras, part three).

As to which of the gurus should be the object of a disciple's reverent respect: all of them, with special regard to one's guru who made the contact possible. The real guru is God, embodied gurus (teachers) are God's representatives.

4. I have been on the spiritual path for ten years. I feel that my practices and my career are successful. I have problems dealing with ordinary people and I think this may be inhibiting my spiritual growth. The average person seems to be wasting time and doing very little that is worthwhile. When with them, I become disinterested. I have my personal life in order; how can I enjoy relationships more?

In personal relationships, it is helpful to overlook the seeming shortcomings of others; also, to be selective. Choose those with whom you desire to associate without finding fault with others. It is true that most people are wasting their lives. That is the self-conscious condition. When referring to varied interests (or lack of same) and personality characteristics of individuals, Paramahansaji often said, "The world is a big place and there is room enough in it for everyone."

Once, when someone criticized the personal behavior of a truth teacher, my guru said, "Yes, he has his faults. Almost everyone has faults. Remember, however, he does good work and helps many people."

Through the years, several of Paramahansaji's disciples whom he ordained to teach eventually separated from him, thinking that they could be successful on their own (they weren't.) Only rarely in private circumstances did he express his disappointment; publicly, he never said anything against them. Aware of human weaknesses and tendencies, he always endeavored to bring out the best qualities in everyone.

One swami, in Los Angeles, who represented another organization, was envious of Paramahansaji's popularity. Both were from the Bengal region of northeast India. From time to time, my guru invited the swami to have lunch or dinner with him at SRF headquarters, personally supervised the preparation of the food, and even provided an ashtray so that his guest, a habitual smoker, might enjoy a cigarette after his meal. So far as I know, the swami never overcame his envy; I do know that Paramahansaji never ceased to be gracious and thoughtful.

5. I have been studying and meditating for several years. I enjoy learning and my meditations are satisfying. However, my awareness is not expansive. I feel confined; I feel that there is still a distance between me and God.

The problem may be self-centeredness rather than Self-aware-

ness: identification with thoughts, moods, and personality characteristics rather than with the essence of Being. Or it may be that you are overly preoccupied with philosophical theories, practice of meditation techniques, or pleasant moods experienced during meditation practice.

Continue to acquire useful knowledge (of all kinds, not only about philosophical matters). Continue to practice meditation, remembering that you are practicing to experience clarification and expansion of awareness. Meditation techniques are like tools to be used to accomplish intended purposes; use them skillfully, then put them aside.

Contemplate the fact that the wholeness of God (the one field of Consciousness) includes you. To think we are separate from God is to maintain the illusion (misperception) of what is true. After practice of meditation techniques, in the deep silence, contemplate the wholeness of Consciousness. Perceive yourself to be a bubble of awareness in vast, endless space. Before concluding your practice session, acknowledge the billions of souls in the wholeness of God. Radiate your good will to them. After meditation, maintain your awareness of omnipresence, of wholeness. Live with serene enthusiasm.

6. Is devotion to God important?

Devotion enables our awareness to merge with the object of devotion. God doesn't need our devotion; we need it and its results. An aspect or form of God may be the object of devotion. Or one may be devoted to the ideal of apprehending and experiencing (realizing) the unmanifest, absolute field of Consciousness. Devotion inclines us toward that to which we desire to be unified, enables us to surrender to it, and attracts that which we desire. Devotion supports our resolve on the spiritual path and motivates us to perform right actions when we feel inclined to be lazy or be distracted.

In some yoga texts, emphasis is put on realizing the tran-

scendent aspect of Consciousness. Even yogis who at first are not attracted to the idea of relating to an aspect of God, often discover and experience the reality of one or more of God's aspects which can be acknowledged as manifestations of one Consciousness. The aspect of God to which one is most attracted is one's *ishtadevata* (personalized or preferred form of God). Regardless of the aspect of God to which one is devoted, the soul's relationship is always with Consciousness.

Paramahansaji taught that devotion to God should be combined with attentive practice of meditation techniques.

7. Some people say that the world is an illusion.—that it is not real. This idea confuses me. How should one "see" the world?

The world is real because it is a manifestation of cosmic forces emanated from Consciousness. It is not like a mirage that has no substance. If we perceive only the surface appearance of the universe because we are unable to understand the hidden side of Nature, our misperception of the facts is the illusion. It is accurate to say that the world is *illusory* because it is not as it appears to be when only parts of it are viewed. Some misguided people say that it does not matter how one behaves in this world because everything is an illusion. They also say that sickness, misfortune, and suffering do not exist. The universe is governed by causative principles that determine its processes. Sickness, misfortune, and suffering do exist, but do not have to exist for people who are willing to learn how to awaken to levels of awareness which remove them from the causes of difficulty and pain.

Meditate unceasingly, so that you may quickly
know yourself as the Divine Essence.
Lahiri Mahasaya

Addendum

If you live in or near Dallas, Albuquerque, Denver, Hemet (CA), or San Jose, see the seminar schedules for April published in *Truth Journal* and *Transcendence* newsletter, and plan now to attend the programs of your choice. If you can distribute seminar announcement brochures and posters in your area, let us know how many you can use. These will be available in February. Give brochures to people whom you know to be sincerely interested in spiritual growth. Put brochures and posters in bookstores, health food stores, and other places where they are likely to be seen by truth seekers.

Note that kriya initiation will be offered in four of the five cities, including Hemet which is not designated in the printed schedule. If you want to participate in Hemet, be at the First Church of Religious Science, 40450 Stetson Avenue, Tuesday evening, April 20, at 6:30 p.m. Arrive several minutes early to be shown where to gather and to get settled. This private service, which is on a donation basis, will precede the 7:30 p.m. public seminar.

I will go to India again, probably in February or March next year, for three weeks. My main reason for going will be to work with my publishers there, visit bookstores, and perhaps offer a few programs. If you are interested in going along, let me know. We will visit sites related to our gurus and this work, and other interesting places. The cost will be between three and four thousand dollars per person for airfare between the U.S. and India (with a one day rest stop in Europe), transportation in India, meals, and first class hotel accommodations. I will make arrangements with our local travel agent and should have details available by March or April of this year.

A recommended text for this year is my book *The Eternal Way: The Inner Meaning of the Bhagavad Gita*. The Gita and the yoga-sutras are the two basic sources of information for kriya yoga practitioners. Read a few verses from each text every day.

Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates
April – June 1999 Number 20

The Eternal Way

WHAT IS THE EXTENT OF OUR DEDICATION TO THE SPIRITUAL PATH?

Spiritual progress is mostly determined by our resolute dedication to right living and to attentive practices which can unveil our innate capacities and powers. Total commitment and participation produce the most beneficial results.

Guidelines

LAHIRI MAHASAYA'S ADVICE TO DISCIPLES

Dialogue

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

Open discussion. Reader participation invited.

Addendum

Spring / Summer Seminars, retreats, and initiation services.

Among thousands of souls, perhaps one aspires to be enlightened.
Among those who experience superconscious states, very few
accomplish complete God-realization.
Bhagavad Gita 7.13 (paraphrased)

The samadhi of wisdom [of insight and understanding] is accompanied by gross and subtle thoughts, ecstatic tranquility, [partial] Self-realization, and joyful perceptions of oneness with universal consciousness.

The other [transcendent] samadhi leaves a residue of impressions in the mind.

Samadhi without complete knowledge may be temporary. From this state, one may continue to higher realizations or again become involved with the mundane realm and the actions [and attributes] of Nature.

Transcendent samadhi is preceded by Self-awareness, disciplined endeavor, enthusiasm, attentive meditation, and the awakening and emergence of [innate] knowledge.

For those whose practice is intensive and whose progress is fast, samadhi is near [soon experienced].

– *Patanjali's yoga-sutras 1.17 – 21*

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What is the Extent of Our Dedication to the Spiritual Path?

Immediately after Paramahansa Yogananda accepted me as a disciple in early 1951, he assigned me to the SRF center in Phoenix, Arizona, and told me to visit him in California on a regular schedule. A few months later, while walking with him around the perimeter of his private retreat site at Twenty Nine Palms, he quietly said, "When you first came to me, God took twenty-five percent of your karma. The guru takes twenty-five percent. Fifty percent, you have to work out by yourself." He then talked about the importance of unwavering persistence on the spiritual path.

There is no cosmic law that determines the percentage of one's karmic condition that is removed by God's grace and the guru's instruction and silent spiritual help, or how much of one's karma has to be worked out or overcome by personal endeavor. I understood my guru to mean that:

- With commitment to the discipleship path, right choices and right actions enable us to avoid the accumulation of new karma and the potency of karma that has already been accumulated is weakened as *sattvic* (harmonizing and purifying) influences transform and overcome *tamasic* (inertial) and *rajasic* (forceful, impelling) influences. Also, when one's clearly defined choice to be Self- and God-realized is resolute, desires and inclinations originated and driven by egoism cease to be compelling, thus near or distant future misfortune that might have occurred is avoided.
- Mental and spiritual attunement with an enlightened guru awakens and activates the disciple's spiritual forces (*kundalini shakti*) and improves receptivity to the guru's wise counsel and

the impulses of grace that flow. (I experienced spontaneous awakening of my innate spiritual forces a few weeks after I met Paramahansaji.)

- The disciple's right endeavors (complete practice of kriya yoga) weaken and remove physical and mental restrictions and allow innate soul qualities to more easily unfold.

Complete practice of kriya yoga, described in chapter two of Patanjali's yoga-sutras, includes: the mental attitudes and personal behaviors to avoid (*yamas*); the mental attitudes, personal behaviors, and disciplined regimens that contribute to psychological and physiological transformation to adopt and perfect (*niyamas*); and regular, attentive practice of meditation until proficiency in experiencing and maintaining samadhi (superconscious) states is acquired.

Success in kriya yoga practice requires one to think and live differently than most people think and live. Devotees need not (indeed, should not) assume a pious demeanor or in any way endeavor to outwardly dramatize their aspiration to be Self- and God-realized. The only obvious outward characteristics of a devotee should be cheerfulness, patience, nonjudgmental respect for others, and dedication of abilities and resources to the accomplishment of purposes which are of real value. Self-conscious (egocentric) people are primarily preoccupied with superficial matters and with events, experiences, things, and relationships which stimulate or temporarily gratify the senses and reinforce conditioned states of consciousness. Dedicated, knowledgeable kriya yoga devotees live effectively and enjoyably while cultivating their awareness of and attunement with the Infinite.

Subconscious conditionings which confine awareness or compel actions, and erroneous beliefs and illusions, comprise one's karmic condition which is to be overcome, neutralized, or transcended. The words *kriya* and *karma* are derived from the same root: *kri*, to do, or to act. Subliminal drives should be resisted

and their forces transformed and directed to higher purposes. Constructive thinking, wholesome living, meditation practice, and enhanced spiritual awareness weaken and dissolve karmic conditions and enable them to be transcended. A central teaching of yoga is that problems, suffering, or misfortune which may occur because of one's karmic condition, but which have not yet been experienced, can and should be avoided. Frequent or persistent experiences of problems, suffering, or misfortune should not be believed to be necessary for our learning or spiritual growth.

Paramahansaji often reminded disciples to avoid thinking of themselves as being victims of karma. A devotee of God should regulate mental states, emotions, and behaviors by constructive use of will power and by adjustments of mental attitude, moods, and states of consciousness. Karma is of the body and mind, not of the soul which is superior to physical and mental states. Instead of being at the mercy of karma, a wise person implements constructive actions (*kriyas*) to accomplish worthwhile purposes and fulfill spiritual destiny. Like Arjuna (in the Bhagavad Gita story), kriya yoga disciples should be courageous spiritual warriors, energized by their strong resolve to be victorious. The inner contest is always between our soul inclinations and the misdirected (in relationship to our higher purposes) subliminal drives and inclinations and our acquired Self- (soul-) limiting habits.

Every morning when you awaken from sleep, think of God and the gurus. Be fully aware of the primary purposes of life that you are to fulfill in this incarnation: (1) to use your talents and skills effectively in harmony with the processes of the universe; (2) to have your life-enhancing desires easily fulfilled; (3) to have your real needs spontaneously satisfied; (4) to experience rapid, progressive spiritual growth that culminates in illumination of consciousness.

Attend to your early morning spiritual practice routine. Enliven the chakras and brain by concentrated kriya yoga pranayama practice so that, during the day when you are engaged in

your regular activities, you can easily be aware of the currents of prana (life force) circulating freely in the spine and brain. To cultivate superconsciousness, when engaged in activities, be aware at the heart chakra and spiritual eye. When we are primarily interested in mundane matters, the life forces flow downward and into the senses. Kriya yogis should use the senses while keeping the life forces flowing upward. This is the easiest way to Self-mastery—to acquiring control of sensory urges, desires of all kinds, behaviors, and states of consciousness.

To disciples, Paramahansaji often said, "Be one hundred percent on the [spiritual] path! Let your aspiration be like a wood fire that burns steadily for a long period of time; not like a straw fire that brilliantly shines, then quickly goes out. Don't go only halfway on the path, or two-thirds of the way, or almost to the end and turn back. Go all the way [experience liberation of consciousness] in this lifetime! With intense resolve and regular practice of kriya yoga, you can do it!"

While my guru was embodied, he knew that only a few of his disciples were as disciplined and focused as they should have been. While knowing this, he closely observed and continued to encourage them. He would occasionally tell dedicated disciples who, among the others, would soon leave the path and who would persist through the years and accomplish their liberation. He would say to us, "I go through your souls every day; to keep an eye on you and to help you, when you let me help you."

Some of my guru's most spiritually advanced disciples were not members of the monastic community. Although they often had family and business responsibilities, they were committed to constructive living and spiritual practice. To one young man, who expressed his desire to sell his thriving business in a midwestern city and move to California to live in one of the SRF monastic communities, Paramahansaji said, "You don't need to do that. Stay where you are. Faithfully practice kriya yoga and be a good example to others. Start a meditation group. Talk with

me by telephone from time to time, and come to see me as often as you can."

For most devotees, the fastest spiritual progress can be accomplished, not by withdrawing from society, but by making right choices, making a useful contribution to society by the work they do, and cultivating their innate qualities and powers of perception. The way to do this is to "be in the world, yet not of it"—to perceive the world as a play (an ongoing interaction) of cosmic forces without being mentally or emotionally attached to things, situations, or relationships—and to regularly read words of truth and meditate deeply.

The two primary reading sources for kriya yogis are the Bhagavad Gita and Patanjali's yoga-sutras. That is why I have written and published commentaries on these texts. Read a few verses from each source on a regular schedule. Good times to do this are before or after meditation practice, when your mind is calm and you are more receptive. You will then nourish your mind and your Self with words of truth and be motivated to actualize what you read by consistent practice of right living and contemplative meditation. Neither of these texts can be dispensed with until you are permanently established in full Self- and God-realization. At every stage of your unfoldment, you will discover information that will describe your current experiences, inform you of what is yet to be experienced, and provide inspiration.

For practical purposes, also read my most recent book, *The Spiritual Basis of Real Prosperity*. If you are not yet prospering in all aspects of your life, cultivate a prosperity consciousness and learn to live skillfully and successfully. There is no virtue in poverty or inability to function freely in the world. To be liberated, it is essential to eliminate all personal conditions which are restrictive. A person who is presumed to be spiritually enlightened, but who does not or cannot function effectively, is obviously not as spiritually enlightened as he or she should be; for where there is limitation, there is lack of understanding.

Paramahansa Yogananda blessing Mr. James J. Lynn at the conclusion of a kriya initiation service. *Los Angeles, summer, 1951.*

Mr. James Lynn, whom Paramahansaji often referred to as his most spiritually advanced male disciple, was a multimillionaire business executive in Kansas City, Missouri, before he met his guru. He owned insurance companies, was a major bank stockholder, an active investor in several businesses, and later leased several thousand acres of land in Louisiana to drill (successfully) for oil. In the early 1930s, when he was first initiated and practiced kriya yoga meditation techniques, he experienced an ecstatic state.

While remaining attentive to his business responsibilities, Mr. Lynn became a vegetarian, reduced his excess body weight, adopted a regular program of exercise (which included hatha yoga practice), and meditated deeply every day. He maintained regular communication with Paramahansaji by letter and telephone, and traveled frequently to California to see him. He scheduled time each year for meditative seclusion, usually at the SRF retreat facility at Encinitas (which he paid for and gave to the Self-Realization Fellowship in 1936). Through the years, his generous donations of money helped to make possible: Paramahansaji's visit to India (1935-1936); the financial stability of the Yogoda Sat Sanga (the India branch of SRF) boy's residential school at Ranchi; the continued issuance of SRF magazine during its early years of publication; the construction of new buildings; investments to endow the future financial security of the organization; and the land upon which the beautiful new SRF Temple and retreat house at Pacific Palisades was dedicated a few years ago.

Even though Mr. Lynn was an accomplished yogi, able to experience samadhi states at will, it was not until the later years of his life that he was able to free himself from his attachment to money and the need to be in control of events and circumstances. His ability to confront and to manage money and his business and personal affairs enabled him to be successful in his chosen ventures and to do much good. His final "lesson" was to realize

that he was but an instrument through which divine power and purposes were to be fulfilled. He learned that lesson well, and departed this world, in 1955, fully Self- and God-realized, as, many years before, Paramahansaji had told him he would.

In 1951, after conducting a kriya yoga initiation service at the Self-Realization headquarters, Paramahansaji announced that Mr. Lynn was to be his spiritual representative as the next president of Self-Realization Fellowship and conferred upon him the name of Rajasi Janakananda. *Rajasi* was an innovation, indicating one who is attuned with and a conduit of divine, creative power. *Janak[a]* was a spiritually enlightened king who lived in ancient India. The Sanskrit word *ananda* indicates the bliss of God-communion.

Kriya initiates who attempt to defend or to justify their personal limitations do not yet comprehend the facts of life, or are weak-willed or irresponsible. I have heard most of the excuses, a few of which are:

- "I can't improve my situation; I have heavy karma."
- "I don't have a teacher, nor do I have any friends who aspire to spiritual growth or to encourage me."
- "I love God so much I'm not interested in worldly matters."
- "There is no reason to try to accomplish anything because everything is an illusion anyway."
- "I've tried to help myself. Nothing that I do ever results in improvements. The problems and restricted circumstances I have must be God's will for me."

Most karmic (causative) influences are produced by our own thoughts, moods, and actions. The beliefs and habits of thinking and behavior we unconsciously acquired from our parents or other people, or adopted because of our attempts to understand and relate to the world, are also influential. All karmic influences can and should be modified, weakened, eliminated, renounced,

and transcended. We should not allow our lives to be determined by subconscious drives, irrational thoughts, or impulsiveness. All thoughts, moods, actions, relationships, and circumstances should be wisely chosen.

Individuals who aspire to spiritual growth, who do not have a guru-disciple relationship, should pray to God (the real teacher) and seek out sources of accurate knowledge of God and how to be God-realized. While having friends who understand and support one's dedication to the spiritual path may provide a degree of emotional comfort, if intention to be Self-realized is firmly resolved, neither the advice nor the encouragement of others will be needed.

When sincere devotion to God results in realization (knowledge and experience) of what God is—the one Consciousness which has a transcendent, absolute aspect and is also manifesting as all that is, including us—we can live in relationship to Nature and to others with higher understanding. Love of God (or of anyone or anything) that is allowed to express as irrational emotionalism or obsessive desire is a symptom of emotional immaturity, detrimental to psychological health, and an obstacle to authentic spiritual growth.

Nothing that exists, which can be perceived, is an illusion. Illusions are incomplete or inaccurate perceptions of concepts, things, or circumstances. While every manifested thing is constantly changing, the essence of things does not change. By self-training in learning to perceive with accuracy and by improving our understanding and functional skills, we become more cosmic conscious: more insightful, with improved abilities to appropriately relate to concepts, things, circumstances, and the inevitable changes that are constantly occurring in space and time.

What is sometimes referred to as "God's will" is the innate inclination of Consciousness to be freely expressive. God is not a humanlike being with personality characteristics, or motivated by whims and desires. Our circumstances tend to manifest and

persist because we claim them as our own. Why not choose to claim freedom, functional ability, and Self- and God-knowledge rather than cling to habits of thinking, feeling, and behavior which cannot satisfy us?

As we provide our support to the processes of evolution, the processes of evolution can be more supportive of us. Paramahansaji once said to me (and to three other disciples who were present at that time), "God's will, will be done, regardless of whether you participate with it, or [do] not. But how much better it is to willingly participate! When you do, your own spiritual growth is speeded up." Prior to saying that he had mentioned that the currents of evolution were, in our era, causing rapid, transformational planetary changes, and that millions of people whose soul qualities were being awakened needed to be spiritually educated and encouraged to become Self-realized.

My guru, already spiritually liberated, had no self-serving motives for the work that he did. His mission-purpose was to assist others to their spiritual liberation. All of his actions were dedicated to helping people become aware of their true nature and the reality of God. He often said that organized endeavors to help people were of little value if those who were served were not encouraged to discover their own spiritual potential and to live effectively.

Whether we abide in this world, or in the astral or causal realms after this incarnation, until we fully awaken from involvements with material phenomena we have to be responsible for our states of consciousness and experiences. It is, therefore, beneficial to choose to be knowledgeable and effectively functional here and now. By being awake to Self- and God-knowledge, and removing or transcending karmic conditions while we are embodied, we will be better prepared for whatever is to be our role in the cosmic drama in the future. To make spiritual growth easier, it is helpful to have a larger purpose in life than mere physical survival, and useful actions to perform which nurture

the universe and assist souls to Self-discovery. In this way we become increasingly aware that we are participating with evolutionary processes which are assisting us.

Reinforce your spiritual practice. Expand your awareness and accelerate your spiritual growth by actively participating in our ministry endeavors. (In this article I refer to the Center for Spiritual Awareness ministry because most readers of this magazine were initiated by me. If you are an initiated member of another organization which represents this kriya yoga tradition, participate in that work.)

• Make regular financial donations in accord with your means. If you are wealthy, make a substantial donation to help fund some of our outreach projects. While donations to the CSA Endowment fund are helpful because this fund will provide income in the future, much work needs to be done now. To maintain and expand our services, donations designated for the general operating fund are most helpful.

With the passing of the month of March, I am in the sixty-ninth year of my present incarnation. December 23 of this year will be the 50th anniversary of my meeting with my guru, which, to me, is a more significant date (he told me my "new life" began then.) Forty-eight years ago Paramahansaji ordained me to represent this kriya yoga tradition and told me initiate others. I am fully aware that any good that has resulted from my endeavors through the years has been due to God's grace. Until now, only a small portion of what I am to do has been accomplished. Much ministry work remains to done, and many willing, competent helpers are needed to complete it. For this reason, and for your own benefit and the sake of others who will be benefited in the near and distant future, I invite your active participation.

• Whenever we publish a new book, immediately obtain a copy, read it, and tell others about it. If you want to purchase our books to give to friends, you may order them at 50 percent discount.

When you order books for this purpose, let us know that they are for giving to others. The regular discount for retail booksellers is 40 percent.

Our books are priced much lower than books offered by most publishers. Commercial publishers establish a retail price that is approximately ten times their actual cost of manufacture to enable them to realize a large profit, pay a ten to fifteen percent royalty to the author, and absorb the costs of unsold books which have to be discounted or shredded and recycled. We keep our profit margin low. I am not paid royalties for books published by CSA Press. We give books free to anyone who cannot afford to pay for them.

- If you have friends or associates who have been initiated into this kriya yoga tradition who do not know about *Radiance* magazine, show them one of your copies and let them know that they can subscribe. Give free copies of *An Easy Guide to Meditation* and *Truth Journal* to others. Be discriminating. Be sure that the person to whom you give our literature is interested in our teaching emphasis.
- Participate in our seminars and retreats. You will always learn something new. What you already know will be confirmed. Your participation will uplift you spiritually. You will be able to meditate more effectively. Your attunement with this work will be improved. Your personal presence and quiet demeanor will encourage and motivate others.
- If a CSA meditation group is active in your community, attend it, at least occasionally. If there is no CSA meditation group in your community, start one. For guidelines, if you have number 12 of *Radiance*, read the article: "Procedures for Establishing and Successfully Facilitating Group Meditation Meetings." If you do not have this issue, request a copy of the article.
- If you feel that you are "called" to represent this work—to present lectures, offer meditation seminars, or in some other useful way be of service—let me know.

If you have been practicing kriya meditation for five years or more and are willing to be taught how to initiate others, let me know. *Desire* to teach or to initiate is a barrier to effective representation; what is required is *egoless "willingness"* to do it. We are only the instruments in the transmission process. Thoughts such as "*I* want to teach or initiate" or "*I* have something of spiritual value to offer to others" arise because of arrogance: an exaggerated sense of self-importance. Initiators must maintain a close relationship with the guru who gives them permission to initiate and be attentive to their own spiritual practices. Babaji told Lahiri Mahasaya, "Kriya initiation given by someone who is not qualified to do it is not real initiation; it is only instruction."

- Make daily spiritual study and meditation the basis of all else that you do, then offer your actions (your thoughts, feelings, hopes and dreams, the work you do, how you relate to others) to God. Be a full-time kriya yogi rather than a part-time devotee.

Seeds of karma [because of your past actions] can be eliminated by persistent endeavor. If a bad habit is bothersome, do two things. (1) Avoid whatever caused it or stimulated it, without concentrating on it in your zeal to avoid it. (2) Direct your attention to a good habit, and culture it until it becomes natural for you.

Paramahansa Yogananda

Lahiri Mahasaya's Advice to Disciples

The following quotations are taken from personal letters to disciples and written notes when commenting on scriptures.

The world is a place for being tested and examined.
One should test oneself, be skillful, and not be naive.
One must not be afraid of anything.

Some people used to receive instruction in kriya yoga [practices] only because they wanted to have their illness healed or their problems solved. After having benefits, they stopped their practices. I do not feel inclined to give instruction to those who have no desire to continue their practices.

Practice kriya meditation techniques to the extent that is easily possible and without strain or restlessness. When tranquility is experienced, do not disturb it by practicing pranayama or other procedures.

Kriya meditation practice is more effective when one's health is good and the body chemistry is nourished with a vegetarian diet.

Those who say they want [only ordinary] happiness, enjoyment, and longevity, and not liberation—all of their words are meaningless.

If you practice [kriya meditation] according to instructions, all will be good for you. You will experience great peace.

There is only one Self, which is the ultimate reality.
It is the source of all [that is manifested].

When the devotee is no longer aware of meditating and is stable in Self-knowledge which is nondual and blissful, a true state of oneness is experienced.

Meditation is conscious awareness of the presence of God within us. It is the constant remembrance of the transcendental Spirit within our own consciousness. God is revealed within us when our consciousness is made pure by liberating it from all concepts of duality and finitude.

At the spiritual eye, the light of God shines.
The spiritual eye is the inner door that leads the soul's awareness into the realm of the divine glory of God. God dwells in each person and can be known when one enters the sanctuary of pure, illumined consciousness.

When the waves of consciousness are transcended by concentrated meditation practice, consciousness, being purified, experiences oneness with the Supreme Self. The manifested world, the seeker's consciousness, and the Supreme Consciousness are experienced as one.

The soul is immortal. God's attributes permeate the soul.
Let your spiritual path be that of God-communion.

Restless thoughts persist because of the restless movements of prana [life forces].

Persisting, persisting; one day, behold!, the divine goal.

Dialogue

Your participation is invited. Use the form provided with each issue of *Radiance* or write a brief note to the CSA office.

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1. I am having difficulty in feeling a surge of life force in the spine when I practice kriya pranayama. Should I also try to visualize the current moving upward when inhaling during kriya pranayama?

When doing kriya pranayama, create a suction feeling in the throat when inhaling, and relate that feeling to the spine. Pull the current upwards. You may have a mental picture of the flow of current, but there is no need to clearly visualize it. Relax the body, put your awareness and feeling in the spine, and patiently work with the technique until you have results. It can also be helpful to do a few simple stretching movements or yoga postures that directly influence the spine, then maha mudra, before sitting to meditate. Whatever can be done to improve awareness of the spine will be helpful. Feel inside the spinal pathway as you pull the current upward through the chakras and into the brain. Let the current flow down with exhalation.

2. When I was initiated, I was instructed to perform fourteen kriya pranayamas at each meditation session, twice a day. However, when I practice at night, afterwards, I have difficulty sleeping. Is it all right to do twenty-eight repetitions during my morning session. I practice hong-sau mantra prior to performing kriya pranayamas. With this routine, should maha mudra be done before or after mantra practice?

You might try meditating earlier in the evening. If this does not solve the problem, you can do the daily twenty-eight pranayamas during the morning meditation session. Practice maha mudra before sitting to meditate. Use the mantra until you are relaxed and calm, then proceed with kriya pranayama.

Sit in the tranquil silence for awhile, then do jyoti (yoni) mudra. Conclude by being absorbed in the silence, looking into the spiritual eye and listening to Om.

3. I was initiated into TM meditation practice many years ago, then went many years without practicing the technique. I know that it is said that techniques and traditions should not be mixed, however, I do have good results with the TM mantra now that I am back into a regular schedule of meditation practice. Can this be done along with the kriya yoga meditation techniques.

Any mantra that attracts your attention and keeps it inward is helpful to use. If the mantra you received when you were initiated into TM meditation practice works for you, use it. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of the TM (Transcendental Meditation) movement, now in his seventies and living in Holland, is a disciple of Swami Brahmananda Saraswati, an illumined saint who was one of the four Shankaracharyas of India. The unbroken lineage of Shankaracharyas are recognized as being the spiritual leaders (*acharyas*, preceptors or teachers of revealed truth: *veda*) of Hinduism. They reside at four major centers of learning founded by the renowned philosopher-seer Adi (the first) Shankara (788-822 CE). Shankara (who was initiated into kriya yoga practices by Babaji) revived the ancient order of swamis (renunciates). When they take their monastic vows, swamis include in their monastic name the name that designates their affiliation. When Paramahansaji became a swami, he was thereafter known as Swami Yogananda of the *giri* (mountain) branch of the swami order, to which his guru belonged. The mantras taught by TM teachers are traditional seed (*bija*) mantras, described in Vedic literature. Each is believed to have a unique sound-frequency (seed) that, when recited or listened to, corresponds to specific cosmic forces which are influenced and attracted into the meditator's field of awareness and confers benefits.

In our kriya yoga tradition (transmitted through Babaji,

Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, Paramahansa Yogananda, and disciple-initiators of these gurus) seed mantras are also taught, to be used during advanced stages of meditation practice. The mantras *lam, vam, ram, yam, ham,* chanted at the five chakras, starting at the bottom and moving upwards, are seed mantras; pronounced *lum, vum, rum, yum, hum.*) Other seed mantras that relate to the chakras and the spiritual eye are mentally chanted when practicing the third and fourth kriya techniques. These mantras and procedures are taught to kriya initiates who have acquired proficiency in using the basic techniques.

When a person is initiated into meditation practice and given a mantra, with or without a unique sound-frequency, it is "empowered" by the consciousness, intention, and shakti of the guru who imparts it. When used by the initiated disciple, the potency of the mantra is taken into deeper levels of mind and awareness and has a transformative effect. It also aids in maintaining a mental and spiritual connection with the guru. This is one reason why it is recommended that meditation methods of different traditions (as useful as they may be for members of a tradition) not be mixed. Attempting to establish and maintain mental and spiritual attunement with other energy frequencies may interfere with the transmission of grace that can flow more easily if attunement with only one authentic tradition is maintained. Paramahansaji explained these matters to me during the first year I was with him. While honoring all authentic teachings and all enlightened teachers, he emphasized the spiritual importance of cultivating attunement with one tradition and its lineage of gurus (preceptors). He did this, not for the purpose of controlling the behavior of disciples, but to enable them to experience rapid spiritual growth in the shortest duration of time.

Those of you who know me personally, know that I, too, honor all authentic teachings and all enlightened teachers, yet, not even once during the almost fifty years since Paramahansaji accepted me as a disciple, have I ever deviated from my attunement with

my guru and the lineage of gurus or from the teachings of this tradition. I am not provincial (small-minded, intellectually limited by lack of knowledge or by fixed concepts), nor am I a dilettante (a superficial investigator of various branches of knowledge). I have learned from (and by observing) many people and from my own experiences and spontaneous episodes of sudden insight. With the passing of the seasons and the years, I more clearly perceive the validity of the philosophical teachings and the practical usefulness of the lifestyle and meditation practices of this kriya yoga path.

4. According to the written information about kriya pranayama, regular practice of the technique "quickens" the practitioner's spiritual evolution. I know some kriya initiates who say they have been regularly practicing for several years, with little evidence of changes having occurred in their mental outlook or states of awareness (according to them). How long does it take for these practices to produce obvious improvements? Should one continue to practice if effects are not apparent after several months or years?

The free-flowing life forces that circulate as a result of kriya pranayama practice enliven the nervous system and gradually refine the physical body, allowing soul awareness to more easily express. These changes occur over a period of time. Just as important to spiritual growth process are our endeavors to be alert, expand awareness, and manage our thoughts and actions to improve our ability to perceive clearly and function effectively. Many devotees expect the practice of techniques to "make something happen" that will produce dramatic improvements. They want a technique (or God or the saints) to do for them what they need to do for themselves. Continue to practice the meditation techniques, acquire proficiency in experiencing and maintaining superconscious states, and live wholesomely and constructively with alert attention directed to what you do and to thoughts and feelings of real purpose for your life.

5. What is the primary key to success in spiritual practice?

The key to is to acquire complete mastery of attention.

> When fluctuations of awareness cease, the seer [the Self or perceiver] abides in its own nature. When not abiding in its own nature, the seer is inclined to identify with the fluctuations and their modifying influences which manifest in the field of individualized awareness.
>
> – *Patanjali's yoga-sutras 1.3,4*

Our awareness is an individualized aspect of the one field of Consciousness. When our awareness is not influenced by the fluctuations and transformations that occur because of restlessness, it is clear. When it is consciously clear (when we are not asleep or unconscious) we experience our real, pure nature. Vivid, conscious experience of our real nature is Self-realization, the culmination of spiritual practice.

Until Self-realization is permanent, episodes of clarity may be disturbed when attention wavers or mental or emotional states interrupt concentration. When practicing meditation, remember that the purpose of practice is to accomplish the state of conscious, clear awareness. When not meditating, cultivate peace of mind at all times by constant Self- and God-remembrance and by calmly and appropriately relating to others and to circumstances. Learn to observe your thoughts, moods, and external circumstances while remaining inwardly stable in Self-awareness. This is yoga (always having your awareness unified with the larger field of Consciousness).

Addendum

If you live in, near, or can travel to Dallas, Albuquerque, Denver, Hemet (CA), or San Jose, refer to the April seminar schedules published in *Truth Journal, Transcendence* newsletter, or the brochure which is being mailed to you. Make reservations early to participate in one of the programs. If you can distribute announcement brochures in the areas where seminars will be offered, let us know how many you can use. Give brochures to people whom you know to be sincerely interested in spiritual growth. Put them in bookstores, health food stores, and other places where they are likely to be seen by truth seekers.

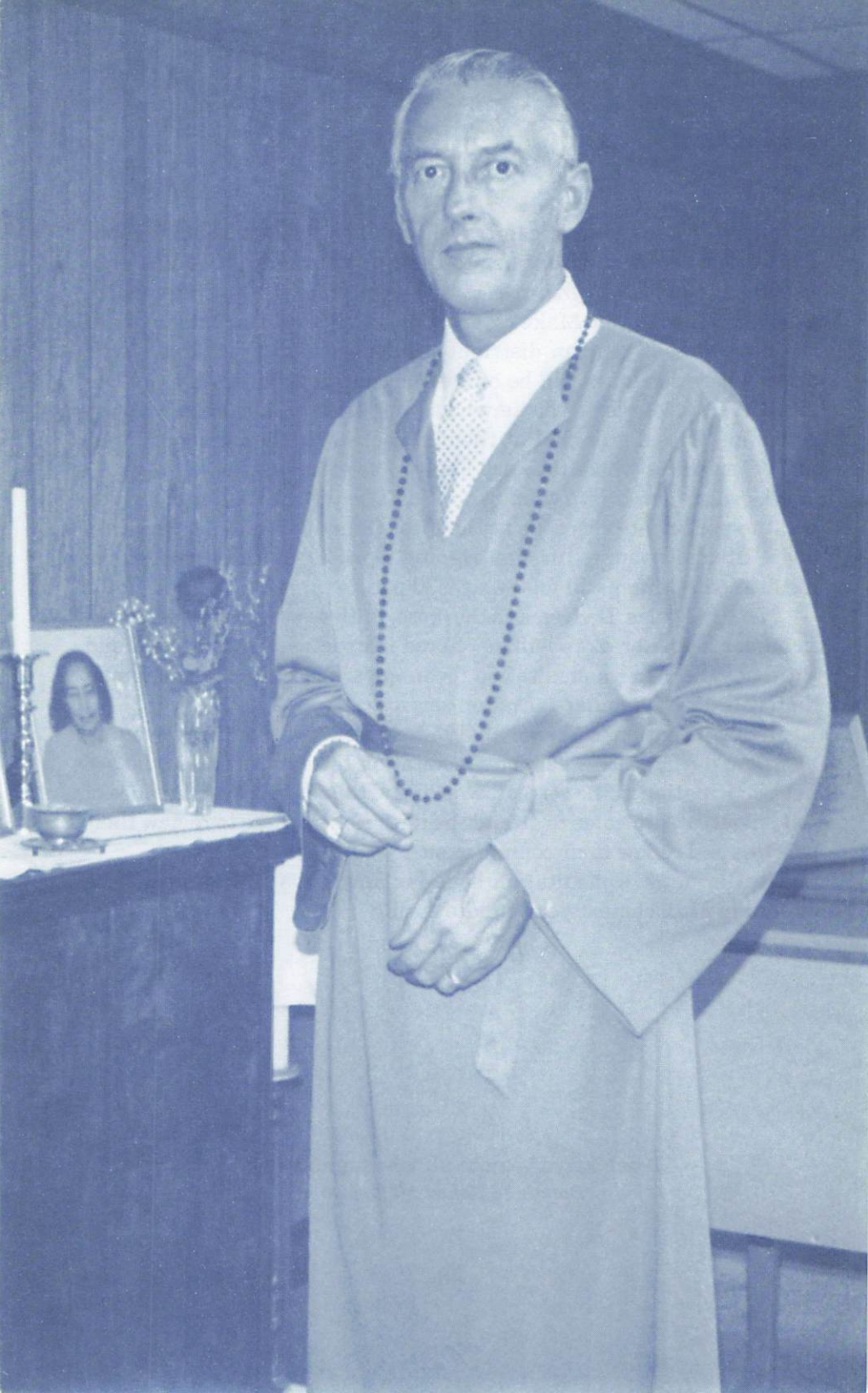
A private kriya initiation service will be offered in Hemet. If you want to participate there, be at the First Church of Religious Science, 40450 Stetson Avenue, Tuesday evening, April 20, at 6:15 p.m. A public meditation seminar will follow, at 7:30 p.m.

Note: in Dallas, Denver, and San Jose, initiates who have been practicing for a year or more will be offered instruction in the second and third advanced kriya meditation techniques. This will be done immediately after the regular initiation service.

Kriya initiation is offered at CSA headquarters Thursday evening at 7 p.m. during each week long meditation retreat. Initiates who are not participating in the retreat, who live within easy travel distance of Lakemont, are welcome to attend the initiation services to review their practice and renew their commitment.

In Germany, a meditation seminar and kriya initiation will be offered in Munich next year, in late spring.

Teach kriya yoga to all who humbly ask.
Babaji, to Lahiri Mahasaya



Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates

July – September 1999 Number 21

The Eternal Way

THE UTTER SIMPLICITY OF THE SPIRITUAL PATH

Progressive unfoldments of innate soul qualities occur and fortunate events spontaneously transpire when we faithfully conform our lives to the fundamental practices recommended by the teachers of this kriya yoga enlightenment tradition.

Inspiration

THE WISDOM OF SRI YUKTESWAR

Selected from his published writings.

Dialogue

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

Reader participation invited.

Addendum

Special Retreats at CSA Headquarters
Two Cassette Tapes Available for Kriya Initiates
News and Outreach Projects

Ignorance of what is true causes one to erroneously presume the noneternal to be eternal, the impure to be pure, the painful to be pleasurable, and ego-identity to be the real Self.

Patanjali's yoga-sutras 2:5

Blessed is that day, that hour,
The favorable moment
When the man of God came
And graced my abode.

Such was the effect of his darshan*
That the veil fell from my eyes,
I heard the divine melody within
And duality came to an end.
The gates that blocked my hearing
Were hard as stone,
Yet they broke to pieces
When the man of God came
And blessed my abode.

– *Kabir*

* In this poem Kabir, who lived in Varanasi, India, in the thirteenth century, described his experience when initiated by his guru into the meditation method of listening to inner sound (Om). The Sanskrit word *darshan* means to see what is real; to perceive more clearly. In the presence of an enlightened person one may be enabled to intuitively apprehend a higher order of reality.

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The Utter Simplicity of the Spiritual Path

That one who is devoted to yoga practice [samadhi], whose awareness is purified, who is tranquil, whose senses are controlled, who abides in cosmic consciousness, is not tainted by actions. – *Bhagavad Gita 5:7*

Without Self-knowledge there is no possibility of having true peace. When one's attention dwells on objects of desire and the senses become stimulated, the mind follows, as a boat on water is carried away by the wind. Mental restlessness then obscures Self-knowledge. – *Sri Yukteswar*

Every day, resolve to meditate more deeply than you did the day before. Focus your attention within. You will experience new power, strength, and peace of body, mind and spirit. All obstacles that now limit you will be vanquished.
– *Paramahansa Yogananda*

Strait [narrow] is the gate, and likewise is the way [path], which leads to [realization of conscious] life, and few there are who find it. – *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew 7:14*

The precise definition of *yoga* is samadhi: identification of awareness with the one Consciousness commonly referred to as God. Real yoga practice is practice of samadhi until it is the permanent, purified (clarified, without modifications) state of consciousness. All other useful practices which may be used are *yogic procedures*, not yoga. Mastery of samadhi results in mental and emotional tranquility, effortless restraint of sense urges, spontaneous unfoldments of cosmic consciousness, and the ability to live effectively without being constrained by the actions one performs. Awareness is not blurred and no harmful samskaras (mental impressions) are accumulated. Although samadi (super-

consciousness) leaves impressions in the mind, they are entirely constructive.

The kriya yoga path is simple to understand. Memorize the first verse of chapter two in Patanjali's yoga-sutras:

> Austerity, Self-study, and devotion to God are the means by which one realizes peace. This is the practice of kriya yoga.

In the Sanskrit text, the word *tapas* (*tap* [heat], to burn) is used to emphasize austere (severe, as needed) practices that resist, weaken, and eliminate mental and emotional blockages and allow vital forces and soul awareness to flow freely. When urges or desires which may have harmful results if allowed to be expressed are resisted, frustration (which may cause feelings of anger or confusion to arise) may be experienced until such urges or desires cease or are replaced by constructive inclinations and aspirations.

Self-study or Self-analysis (*swadayaya*) enables us to discern the difference between our true nature as a pure conscious being and the blurred, fragmented condition of ordinary self-conscious (egocentric) states of awareness. When our true essence is apprehended, it is easier to apprehend the reality of God.

Our God-devotion (*Iswara-pranidhana*) is complete when we have fully renounced (surrendered, let go, discarded) the illusional sense of selfhood. By doing this, the reality of God (the wholeness of Consciousness) is realized (apprehended and directly experienced). While egoism (the illusional sense of selfhood independent of God) persists, the erroneous notion that God is a being apart from us tends to also persist.

Yoga (samadhi) practice makes possible actual experience of the pure conscious state. It is not always necessary to sit in a meditation posture to experience superconsciousness. At any time, when attention is detached from thoughts and emotions, an adjustment of viewpoint that clarifies awareness can occur. Thoughts, feelings, and objective events can then be observed

while remaining poised in a superconscious state.

Samadhi (clear awareness of wholeness) is not a state to "go into" or "attain"; it is our natural state. We cannot enter into, nor attain, our true nature. If we are not superconscious, it is because our attention is identified, unknowingly or by choice, with ordinary, conditioned states of awareness. Practice of kriya yoga regimens weakens our identification with the characteristics of ordinary states of awareness and allows us to experience our true essence. We can then accurately perceive and know the truth about ourselves and our relationship to God, our mind and body, others, and the world.

Kriya yoga regimens are the means which, when applied, enable us to experience rapid spiritual growth. Halfhearted application will result in moderate improvement. Attentive practice will result in psychological transformation, improved ability to meditate, and authentic spiritual growth. Avoid preoccupation with procedures to the extent that their purposes are forgotten or neglected. Methods are the means which make the accomplishment of purposes possible. Use them only until they are no longer needed.

Even when settled in Self-realization and spontaneously in the flow of supportive resources and events, continue to regularly meditate and perfect samadhi states until your mind is completely purified. Karmic seeds (mental impressions) that formerly inclined you to behave or react inappropriately or unwisely will be eradicated. You will no longer have to try to live righteously. You will always think rationally and act wisely. Because of your soul-impelled right actions and the supportive impulses of God's grace, your spiritual awakening will continue until you are fully enlightened.

> [Some] obstacles to samadhi are illness, doubt, negligence, philosophical confusion, failure to make progress, [emotional] instability, addiction to sense perceptions, misperceptions, and mental distractions. – *yoga-sutras 1:30*

- Illness can be healed by discovering its physical or psychological cause and eradicating it.
- Doubts, and philosophical confusion, can be eliminated by acquiring knowledge and cultivating Self-confidence.
- The habit of neglect can be corrected by constructive use of will power and by cultivating good habits.
- Progress in spiritual growth can be facilitated by removing the obstacles which thwart it.
- Emotional stability can be nurtured by balancing the basic mind-body constitution, wholesome living, and renunciation of debilitating habits of thinking and feeling.
- To be free from addictions of all kinds, choose to be free. Confirm your resolve to be free by being attentive to spiritual practices and performing constructive, soul-satisfying actions.
- Misperceptions (illusions) can be avoided by self-training in attentive observation and discernment of the facts.
- Mental distractions which interfere with concentration can be eliminated (or ignored) by calming the mind, pranayama practice, and sustained interest in matters considered to be meaningful (of real value).

Regular practice of kriya meditation techniques enlivens the nervous system, calms the mind, strengthens constructive resolve, and restores awareness to its clear, natural state.

In the highest state of consciousness you maintain your realization while working, speaking, or moving about in the world. When that state is stable, there is no possibility of falling back into delusion.
Paramahansa Yogananda

The Wisdom of Sri Yukteswar

Swami Sri Yukteswar's family name was Priya Nath Karar. His monastic name *Sri* (that which diffuses or pours forth light) *Yukteswar* (united with *Iswara*, the aspect of God which governs cosmic events) was bestowed on him when he was formally initiated into the swami order. Paramahansa Yogananda often referred to him as a Jnanavatar: an incarnation (*avatar*) of wisdom and knowledge (*jnana*).

When joining two Sanskrit words to form one word, if the first word ends in "a" and the following word begins with "a", one of the letters is not used. In most instances, when "a" is the last letter of a word, it is silent. *Jnana* is pronounced "gyana" or "gyan."

A person who had read *Autobiography of a Yogi* and was favorably impressed, said to Paramahansaji, "Sri Yukteswar must have been a wonderful man." My guru exclaimed: "He was not a man; he was a god [divine being]!"

Note: Paragraphs in smaller type are my comments.

Knowledge that is acquired [only] from external sources is incomplete. Knowledge that is experienced within is direct knowledge. One may taste the sweetness of an apple and based on personal experience say, "The apple tastes sweet." One who has never tasted an apple may attempt to describe its sweetness based only on the words of others. Soon, his converts may be marveling about the wonderful sweetness of apples without ever having tasted one. Indirect knowledge is unsatisfactory, providing only an external meaning of the Truth. It is but a shadow of knowledge, devoid of realization. One who has realization has no [compelling] need to talk about or try to describe the experience.

Knowledge acquired from reliable sources can be helpful; Self-revealed knowledge directly experienced is illuminating. During a conversation with a devotee who asked many questions about God and the spiritual path, Paramahansa Yogananda said, "You remind me of a

Swami Sri Yukteswar

person who constantly talks about food but doesn't eat it. Why don't you meditate and actually "taste" God for yourself."

By the practice of pranayama, when attachment [and desire for enjoyment], as well as strong feelings of aversion are banished, yogic powers [spontaneously] unfold. By these powers, the meditator's mind can be calmed. When mental restlessness [reinforced by restless breathing] is overcome and pranayama is established [harmonized], one's awareness can easily be absorbed in [pure] consciousness. Remaining thus established, one is liberated while embodied.

Siddhis (soul abilities) improve powers of concentration, enable the devotee to use will or intention to accomplish adjustments of states of consciousness, and cause soul forces to flow freely. One whose mind and awareness is fully liberated (from delusions and illusions) is said to be a *jivanmukta* (*jiva*, soul; *mukta*, free) even while embodied.

In a short period of time, by practice of kriya pranayama one can overcome the influences of illusion and awaken from ignorance to illumination of consciousness. From the first day of the lunar cycle, the moon moves away from the sun, passing six signs of the zodiac, to the farthest point from the sun at the time of the full moon. During the dark phase, the moon goes toward the sun, completing its movement through the twelve zodiacal signs. Yogis and sages say that the sun inside the body appears by the practice of yoga kriyas [specifically by practice of yoni mudra] which awakens the [innate] knowledge of consciousness.

The spiritual eye is said to be related to the sun of our solar system; the mind is related to the moon. Yoni mudra (or jyoti mudra) is the supplemental kriya meditation practice used to contemplate the light of the spiritual eye. When awareness is removed from mental processes and focused in the higher brain centers, the soul's intuitive powers are unveiled.

The brain and spinal pathway [*sushumna*, "path of God"] is considered to be the seat of consciousness in the body. The six lower chakras are [said to be] related to the twelve signs of the zodiac. Yoga texts refer to moving the life force through the chakras as kriya pranayama. [This] purifies the samskaras [mental impressions] and keeps the Self cheerful. By purifying the mind and physical systems [with kriya pranayama] the truth-seeker attains a state of beatitude. If no [unusual] events occur, tranquility will persist.

Within the sushumna are two astral channels (gross and subtle) and the causal channel which is sometimes described as "a current of consciousness." Moving flows of life force through the spine and brain weakens and dissolves life-inhibiting mental conditionings (karmic patterns) and enlivens and rejuvenates the physical body. One who practices kriya meditation techniques and experiences states of clarified awareness experiences serene happiness which may be described as bliss (ananda). This perception is not an emotion; it is the sheer joy of Self-awareness devoid of troublesome thoughts or moods and all conditions which might confine soul awareness. Sri Yukteswar's comment regarding unusual events refers to the occurrence of unplanned events (accidents, illness, psychological unrest, or other situations) which may distract one's attention.

Kriya yoga initiates are advised to practice kriya pranayama on a regular schedule to refresh the mind and body and eradicate persistent or deep-seated samskaras. One may practice morning and evening. Devotee's who choose to maintain a more intensive regimen can practice three times a day: morning, noon, and evening. If this is done, one's lifestyle should be well-ordered and all circumstances and relationships should be supportive.

Dialogue

Your participation is invited. Use the form provided with each issue of *Radiance* or write a brief note to the CSA office.

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1. Kriya pranayama is similar to sushumna breathing. In your book, *Life Surrendered in God*, you mentioned that the sushumna breathing technique could be practiced as frequently as desired while it is usually recommended that fourteen kriya pranayamas be done by new practitioners, with more repetitions added from time to time. Please clarify this matter for me.

Sushumna breathing is a milder form of kriya pranayama during which life force is directed upward through the spinal pathway (sushumna) when inhaling and allowed to flow downward when exhaling. Because kriya pranayama is a more dynamic procedure, it is recommended that new initiates perform fourteen cycles, then raise the current, disregard the breath, and sit in the silence—described by Lahiri Mahasaya as the aftereffects tranquility of kriya pranayama practice. When one is proficient in practicing fourteen times and resting in the silence, the number can gradually be increased to twenty-four, thirty-six, forty-eight, and more. Advanced practitioners need not count the repetitions; they may do as many as they feel comfortable doing, so long as extreme effort is not required to complete the regimen. Depth of practice, followed by alert absorption of awareness in the silence, is more useful than excessive practice. The results of practice are more important than the number of pranayamas. Practice of the technique enlivens the nervous system; the aftereffects (superconscious) tranquility purifies the mind and clarifies awareness. Mastery of the yama-niyamas and attentive, constructive living are just as necessary for our total well-being as meditation practice.

When practicing kriya pranayama, prana (essence of life force) in the air that is breathed is transmuted into an aspect of prana that reinforces the practitioner's life force. When the body is charged with life force, the necessity of breathing is diminished, resulting in the quieting of the body's functions and effortless intervals of non-breathing. This state is described in several treatises on yoga practice:

> When the movements of inhalation and exhalation cease, *kevala kumbhaka* [breath retention] occurs.
>
> – *Hatha Yoga Pradipika (Light on Hatha Yoga)* 2:17

> The aspirant who can experience kevala kumbhaka is the true knower of yoga [realization of wholeness].
>
> – *Gheranda Samhita (Collected Knowledge of Gheranda)* verse 95

> To one who is adept in kevala kumbhaka, nothing in the three worlds is unattainable.
>
> – *Shiva Samhita (Collected Knowledge of Shiva)* 3:46-47

A *samhita* (*sam*, "to bring together") is a collection of information compiled from various sources. *Kevala* indicates aloneness, self-existent stillness; used in this instance to describe the state experienced when breathing ceases during meditative contemplation. The "three worlds" are the physical, astral, and causal realms. Nothing is unattainable for the self-realized yogi because all restrictions have been removed from the mind and awareness, or have been transcended.

Lahiri Mahasaya taught that, just as all souls eventually awaken to liberation of consciousness after many physical births and deaths, so an accomplished yogi, by experiencing repeated interludes of breathless superconsciousness, learns to be spiritually awake in one incarnation. When one abides in superconsciousness (whether breathing or not) one "dies" to the world because of having transcended its allure and being no longer influenced by it. When soul awareness is again identified with

conditioned states, one is "reborn." Effective yoga (samadhi) practice enables one to permanently abide in superconsciousness and thus avoid the changes of viewpoint (and experience) referred to as birth and death.

2. How important is it to practice the energization exercises taught by Paramahansa Yogananda? I prefer to do a hatha yoga routine. Is it necessary for kriya initiates to do the energization routine?

The energization exercises, innovated by Paramahansaji in India prior to traveling to America in 1920, are beneficial but not essential. When practiced before sitting to meditate, they can contribute to balancing the flows of life force in the body and improved ability to concentrate. If doing a hatha yoga routine before meditating, conclude with maha mudra, then sit in your preferred meditation posture and practice kriya pranayamas and the supplemental techniques.

Regular hatha yoga practice will strengthen muscles, improve flexibility, beneficially stimulate the endocrine glands, encourage the circulation of blood and lymph fluids, awaken dormant life forces, and prepare the body and mind for meditation. Aggressive or competitive hatha yoga practice is not recommended. A meditative mood should be maintained when doing the asanas, mudras, and pranayamas.

When Bishnu Ghosh, an older brother of Paramahansa Yogananda and a well-known physical culturist in India, came to America many years ago to visit Paramahansaji, he and Mr. J.J. Lynn became friends. Mr. Ghosh offered to teach Mr. Lynn some advanced hatha yoga postures. Paramahansaji advised against it, saying to Mr. Lynn, "If you do it, you may lose your bliss." Excessive involvement with the physical aspects of hatha yoga may distract one's attention from the primary purpose of practice—which is to consider hatha yoga as a foundation for acquiring proficiency in meditation.

3. I have been practicing kriya meditation methods for five years. I have been instructed in the use of hong-sau mantra, contemplation of inner light and sound, kriya pranayama, jyoti mudra, chanting Om at the chakras, and some supplemental techniques. For best results, in what sequence should these procedures be used?

The mantra can be used to elicit relaxation and calm the mind during the early stages of meditation practice. When it is no longer needed, rest in the tranquil state, listening to the inner sound (Om or variations of inner sounds) or be oblivious to inner sound. If attention wanders, listen to the inner sound or, if necessary, again use the mantra. Also, use the mantra anytime for short meditation sessions.

Many devotees prefer to begin with kriya pranayama, rest in the silence, practice jyoti mudra (contemplation of light), rest in the silence listening to Om, then use the mantra—as needed—to remain inwardly focused. Later, chanting of Om at the chakras can be done. Kriya pranayama is the primary technique; the other techniques are supplemental, added as necessary or as one may be inclined to use them.

When using a technique, remember the purpose of its use, which is to help you to accomplish a superconscious state. Some kriya initiates practice the techniques for many years and have very few results because they are more focused on methodical practice than on accomplishing the stage at which they can discern the difference between themselves as pure conscious beings and mind-body states.

4. The philosophical concepts that I have learned seem realistic and the recommended practices produce results. Why is it that the kriya yoga path is not more widely known?

I know of two reasons why the kriya path is not more widely known. 1) This path is meaningful only to those who can understand the teachings, whose aspiration to experience authentic

spiritual growth is fervent, who are emotionally mature, and who will commit to practice. In our current era, few people meet these requirements. 2) Many kriya yoga initiates are either egocentric (self-consciously preoccupied with their own practices and/or personal problems) or complacent in regard to sharing information about this path with others. When sharing information about kriya yoga with others, it is best to accurately present the facts rather than attempt to persuade or convert. Individuals who are receptive will respond favorably. If you do not know many people among your acquaintances who are interested in these teachings, support CSA outreach activities: distribute our literature wherever interested people might see it and donate funds which we will use for advertising.

When Paramahansa Yogananda was a young adult, Sri Yukteswar asked him, "Why are you averse to organizational work? Do you want this divine food (these teachings) only for yourself?" My guru replied, "I have observed that no matter what a leader does, or does not do, there are always some people who will complain and criticize." Sri Yukteswar then asked, "Where would you be today if others had not been willing to make this knowledge available to you?"

5. For the past few months I have been obsessed with thoughts and feelings which cause mental and emotional unrest, such as memories of past injustices, mistakes I have made, and opportunities I have let go by. Also, some (lower chakra) desires of various kinds are bothersome. What can I do to renounce these thoughts and feelings?

Are you getting enough rest? Are you properly nourished? Sometimes sleep deprivation or lack of proper nutrition can result in low energy and inability to concentrate. Do you have a clear sense of meaningful purpose for your life? When you are focused on constructive endeavors you will not be inclined to allow your attention to be involved with useless thoughts and memories of misfortune experienced in the past. Nor will you be

bothered by desires which are not in accord with your primary purposes in life. Meditate deeply every day. Read literature that inspires you. Read the Bhagavad Gita and heed the words of Krishna (higher consciousness) directed to the disciple Arjuna (the truth-seeking soul awakening from delusions and illusions). Engage your mind and energies fully in spiritual practice and intentional, purposeful living. You will then quickly outgrow the habit of allowing yourself to be preoccupied with matters which are not of real value.

6. If our essence is pure consciousness and complete knowledge of the wholeness of Consciousness and its processes is within us, why is it so difficult to be Self- and God-realized?

The primary cause is the conscious or unconscious habit of being attached to modes of thinking, feeling, and behavior which are common to the self-conscious state of awareness. When we mistakenly presume ourselves to be an independent unit of consciousness, other than an individualized unit of one Consciousness, we are naturally inclined to think, feel, and behave accordingly. Develop your powers of intelligence and intuition so that you will be able to discern the difference between your true essence and the illusory sense of selfhood. Also, meditate to provide opportunities to experience your true essence as being other than your conditioned nature, and to enliven and refine the nervous system. Believe that you can be spiritually awake. Aspire to be awake. In your mind, and at the soul level, identify with enlightened souls rather than with people who are not yet spiritually awake. Diligent practice of kriya yoga (lifestyle regimens as well as the meditation methods) gradually, and sometimes quickly, removes psychological and physical obstacles to Self-realization.

7. In regard to living my life, how can I know God's will for me?

Since God is not a cosmic humanlike being, we have to first

know what God is. What is commonly referred to as God is an infinite Consciousness which has both an absolute, pure or unmodified aspect and an aspect which produces universes and individualizes as souls. Rather than ask "What is God's will for us?", it is more helpful to ask, "What is God's innate inclination in regard to the universe and to souls?"

By observing the processes of nature and examining our own aspirations, we can determine that the innate impulse of life is to expand and fulfill its potential for growth. We can, therefore, assume that God's inclination (use the word "will" if you like, defined as a causative force that produces effects) is the empowering influence that contributes to our spiritual awakening, the unfoldment of our soul qualities, and the return of our awareness to wholeness. Whatever we do to assist this process is compatible with the inclination which empowers and supports it.

In regard to our day-to-day activities, whatever we do that utilizes our knowledge, abilities, and skills to live effectively and to nurture others and the planet can be said to be in conformity with the inclinations of Consciousness.

To learn to be responsive to "God's will," the inclinations of Consciousness, surrender (let go of) your illusional sense of selfhood in favor of apprehending and experiencing the essence of your being.

8. I recently read that superconscious states strengthen the body's immune system. The Sanskrit words *soma* and *ojas* were mentioned in the article. What are the meanings of these two words?

Soma is defined as the organizing power of Consciousness, Consciousness which is instrumental in producing harmonious interactions in nature. Its biochemical manifestation in the body is *ojas*, a refined energy-substance that strengthens the immune system and imparts the radiance of health. Soma, sometimes called "the elixir of immortality," is also the name given to the

essence of certain plants and herbs which is used for physical rejuvenation and for altering states of consciousness. Superconscious states allow the organizing power of soul consciousness to flow freely and to produce ojas. Ojas is also produced during the final stage of food transformation—plasma, blood, muscle, fat, bone, bone marrow, and reproductive essences—and is the transmuted essence of mental and physical energies. *Brahmacharya* ("going Godward"), one of the five *niyamas* (restraints) mentioned in Patanjali's yoga-sutras (section two, titled Kriya Yoga) is the discipline of refraining from behaviors which waste vital forces while directing attention and actions to spiritual practices so that mental and physical energies are conserved and transmuted for higher purposes.

Worry, confused thinking, apathy, restlessness, emotional conflict, purposeless activities, excessive stimulation of the senses, impure diet, too much talking, insufficient rest, and stress deplete vital forces. Optimism, rational thinking, zest for living, calmness, emotional contentment, prudent use of the senses, good nutrition, speaking constructively and appropriately, adequate rest, stress management, cultivating awareness of the presence of God, and regular interludes of meditative contemplation nurture our well-being and allow the inherent, organizing power of consciousness within and around us to be influential.

In Ayurvedic texts and the Siddha Medicine literature (of south India), regimens to use for physical regeneration (kaya-kalpa) are described. One who is to undergo the process is taken to a secluded place where there will be no possibility of being disturbed. After physical cleansing, complete rest is prescribed. A modest quantity of food is provided, usually boiled milk and a variety of herbs that have nourishing and strengthening properties. Physical exertion is minimal. After an extended period of sleep, one is advised to meditate, contemplate the wholeness of life, and surrender to the organizing power of Consciousness. After several weeks, the body is rejuvenated and awareness is

clarified. Mahavatar Babaji told a disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya that he (Babaji) had used kaya-kalpa regimens several times. By this means (in the past) and now because of his advanced state of God-realization, he has maintained a youthful body for several centuries. When a person's life force is harmonized with the universal life force, physical deterioration does not occur.

> Exceptional abilities and powers of perception [siddhis] may result from circumstances related to physical birth [a superior mind-body constitution], knowledge of biochemistry, [skillful use of] mantras, practices that effect psychological transformation, and samadhi. – *Patanjali's yoga-sutras 4:1*

9. What are some of the advanced kriya meditation practices?

When Lahiri Mahasaya was with Babaji for two weeks in the Nainital region of the Himalayas, in 1862, he learned many meditation methods. Later, with Babaji's permission, he taught kriya meditation techniques in a progressive sequence to individuals who were prepared to practice them.

Hong-sau (or so-ham) mantra is taught first, then contemplation of Om during the tranquil state after the mantra has been used. When one is proficient in meditation practice, kriya pranayama is taught. Later, the technique of chanting mantras (or Om) at the chakras can be learned and practiced. The third and fourth stages of practice require the use of a twelve-syllable mantra which is mentally chanted at the chakras when practicing kriya pranayama.

It is best to practice mantra meditation, kriya pranayama, and the other basic techniques before practicing the advanced methods. Many years ago I was provided with an opportunity to read part of a transcript of one of Paramahansaji's classes based on Patanjali's yoga-sutras. Although he emphasized the usefulness of kriya pranayama and advanced techniques, he said that it was possible to experience superconsciousness (samadhi) by

the practice of mantra meditation alone. While practice of a meditation technique may contribute to an adjustment of one's state of awareness, the meditator must be alert and attentive to recognize that more refined state and be able to maintain it.

Note: See the Addendum section and the enclosed participation form for information regarding a cassette tape recording with instructions for practicing advanced methods. Initiates who have been practicing kriya pranayama for three or more years may request it.

10. I enjoy reading the recommended books and meditation practice is satisfying. I need to learn to live more effectively and be able to relate to others in ways which are appropriate and meaningful.

Over one hundred years ago Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American poet and essayist, wrote, "It is easy to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."

To live effectively and relate to others appropriately, train yourself to always be soul-centered and God-aware. You will then more easily make right decisions and be able to skillfully accomplish your purposes and efficiently fulfill your duties. Regardless of what you are doing, remember that you are a participant in the game of life. Play your role well, without mental or emotional attachment to what you do or the results of your actions. Cultivate and actualize thoughts, feelings, and behaviors which are sattvic (pure).

> Fearlessness, purity of heart [soul awareness], abiding in yoga [samadhi] with knowledge, charitable giving, self-restraint and holy offerings [of one's actions to God], study of sacred texts, austerity [disciplines practiced to facilitate psychological transformation], uprightness;
>
> Nonviolence, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, serenity, freedom from faultfinding, compassion for all beings, absence of cravings, gentleness, modesty, steadiness;

Vigor, forgiveness, fortitude, freedom from malice and from pride; these are endowments of one born to a divine destiny.
– Bhagavad Gita 16:1–3

You are a kriya yoga initiate. You are destined to be Self- and God-realized. By right endeavor and God's grace, you *can* definitely experience the fulfillment of your spiritual destiny.

11. How important is it to experience the quickening of the energies of kundalini?

Aspiration to be Self-realized is evidence of at least partial awakening of kundalini energies. For some people, a dynamic awakening occurs. For others, the experience is less obvious, occurring mildly and gradually. If strong flows are felt during meditation practice, it is best to remain relaxed and let them move at deeper levels. Aspire to experience a calm state of clarified awareness rather than be overly involved with sensations which manifest and then subside. Mental peace, emotional calmness, devotion, faith, prayer, and meditation allow our soul forces to flow more freely.

By spiritual practice devotion is generated, one's endeavors become successful, worry in regard to planetary influences is removed, and one's dreams are pleasant.
Lahiri Mahasaya

Very few people know that the reality of God extends fully to this physical realm.
Mahavatar Babaji

Addendum

Thirty CSA members, all kriya initiates, participated in the four week retreat program here during the month of May. A similar program will be offered the last two weeks of October and the first two weeks of November, and next year during the month of May. Single rooms are assigned to provide privacy. Participants prepare their own meals. Meditation three times a day. One hour of lecture and discussion. Two hours of work-service. Free time for reading, journal-keeping, and private reflection. Donation basis.

Two Audio Tape Cassettes
Kriya Practice Review and Advanced Techniques

If you would like to review your practice of kriya pranayama and the supplemental techniques learned when you were first initiated, request tape #1.

If you have been practicing these meditation techniques for two or more years and want to learn advanced techniques, request tape #2. Side two has chanting of the mantras *Om Namaha Shivaya* (Om, I acknowledge with reverence the reality of Pure Consciousness) and *Sri Ram, Jai Ram* (victory, freedom in God).

Inform Others About This Path of Light

If you know kriya initiates who are not yet aware of *Radiance* magazine, tell them about it so they can subscribe. Anyone who has been initiated in this tradition, by me or another representative of the lineage of gurus: Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, Paramahansa Yogananda or their disciple-initiators, may request this publication. They will be encouraged on the path and will be able to read information which is not otherwise available to them.

When someone inquires about kriya yoga, suggest that they request free literature from our office and recommend *The Path of Light, Life Surrendered in God,* and *The Eternal Way*. You may also request free literature (*Truth Journal* and the *An Easy Guide to Meditation* booklet) from our office to give to interested people. Don't attempt to persuade others or engage in long discussions, just share information. Let them make their own decisions.

Go to bookstores which stock books on yoga, meditation, and related subjects to see if they have my books available. If they do not, recommend them, or send me the names and addresses of the stores. We will provide them with free book samples and order information.

This summer, I am outlining and starting to write a new, short course of lessons for individuals who are sincerely interested in knowing about the philosophy and practices of kriya yoga and who want to prepare for initiation.

Schedules of Programs

Refer to the inside front cover of *Truth Journal* and page 4 of *Transcendence* newsletter for information about programs at CSA headquarters and in other cities. Initiation is offered here during summer week long retreats and will be offered next year in a few U.S. cities, Munich (Germany), and London.

Recommended Reading Project

This summer, read Patanjali's yoga-sutras several times, the version published in *The Path of Light*; also read *The Eternal Way* (the inner meaning of the Bhagavad Gita).

Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates

October – December 1999 Number 22

The Eternal Way / 3

AWAKENING YOUR INNER POTENTIAL

Progressive unfoldments of innate soul qualities spontaneously occur and fortunate events transpire when we faithfully conform our lives to the fundamental practices recommended by the teachers of this kriya yoga enlightenment tradition.

Inspiration / 9

INITIATION AND COMMITMENT TO DISCIPLESHIP

Initiation is a transitional event that marks the moment in time when the devotee renounces ordinary ideas and habits, acquires higher knowledge, resolves to live with conscious intention, and is empowered to do so.

Dialogue / 17

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

Reader participation invited.

Addendum / 22

Special Retreats at CSA Headquarters
and the year 2000 travel schedule.

One who has put away the desires of the mind and is content in Self-knowledge, is said to be established in wisdom. One whose mind is untroubled in the midst of misfortune and is free from cravings in the midst of pleasurable circumstances, from whom passion, fear and anger have departed, and whose meditative concentration is steady, is said to be a sage [to be wise].

– *Bhagavad Gita 2:55.56*

To jump and move restlessly,
To rock and sway
Is not the way of devotion.
Such people imitate devotees:
They move about
In ritualistic garments,
But there is no authenticity
In a loud show of piety.
Such people do not appeal to me,
For to rock and sway
Is not the way of devotion.

They have one thing on their tongue,
The opposite in their heart;
Even in their dreams
They will not know me,
Nor my path.

– *Kabir*

In this short poem Kabir (Varanasi, India, 13th century) portrays outward dramatizations of devotion as symptoms of emotional immaturity and a lack of understanding. Kabir's "path" was meditative contemplation on the primordial sound current, Om.

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AWAKENING THE POTENTIAL WITHIN YOU

> The light of God shines at the spiritual eye, the inner door that leads the soul's awareness into the realm of divine glory of God. The reality of God that dwells in each person can be known by entering the sanctuary of illumined consciousness.
>
> – *Lahiri Mahasaya*

The soul's life force enters the body through the medulla oblongata at the base of the brain, flows into the brain and downward through the five vital centers in the spine, and through a network of subtle astral channels to nourish the body and regulate its functions.

In the body of a person who is not spiritually awake, surplus soul force which is not needed to maintain physical functions, remains dormant at the base chakras. *Kundalini* is the "coiled" dormant soul force with innate potential to be expressive and transformative. It is an individualized aspect of the power of Consciousness which pervades the universe. Its energy (*shakti*) is an individualized aspect of the Cosmic Energy that enlivens nature.

Kundalini awakens naturally when the soul's innate urge to have its awareness clarified and restored to wholeness is dominant. It can be encouraged to awaken by sustained aspiration to be spiritually aware, devotion, compassion, prayer, pranayama practice, practice of certain hatha yoga routines, mantras and other meditation techniques, and superconscious meditation practice. It can awaken spontaneously when psychological and physical health is optimum, when one is in an environment where refined spiritual forces prevail, and when one whose mind and nervous system are receptive is in the presence of a person in whom kundalini energies are freely flowing.

When the activation of a disciple's vital forces occurs because

of the influence of the guru's kundalini energy, the process of transmission is referred to as *shaktipat*. When the disciple is receptive, the transmission may occur spontaneously or it may be induced by the guru's intention, touch, or eye contact.

Receptivity to the beneficial influences of the guru's illumined consciousness and awakened spiritual energies can be improved by regular meditation practice and the nurturing of faith, mental and emotional calmness, and humility. Egocentricity should be renounced; mental calmness should be maintained; psychological conflicts should be resolved; aspiration to be Self-realized should be fervent.

I experienced a sudden and unexpected awakening of kundalini energies a few weeks after I met Paramahansa Yogananda. He had not suggested that it would occur, nor did he ask me about my reactions. In the weeks that followed, he quietly observed me and, from time to time, provided helpful advice of a personal nature.

Unlike the indiscriminate publishing of information (much of which is unworthy of being called knowledge) about spiritual growth processes in our Current Era, enlightened teachers emphasize the superior value of personal instruction. The qualified (well-prepared) disciple can then acquire accurate information and be guided through progressive stages of psychological and spiritual growth.

Awakened kundalini energies flow upward through the chakras, enlivening their actions. The mind is energized. The body is vitalized. Psychological transformation may be gradual or fast. Awareness is clarified and, no longer confined, expands. Powers of discriminative intelligence are enhanced. Intuitive powers improve. Superconscious states emerge. Interest in ordinary activities and relationships may diminish. If the devotee's attention and actions are not engaged in purposeful endeavors, confusion may be experienced. For this reason, when undergoing adjustments of states of awareness, it is important to adhere

to routines of orderly living and meditation practice which will contribute to mental and emotional stability. It is also helpful to obtain sufficient sleep and choose nourishing foods.

Avoid late-night activities, excessive social involvements, and fasting from food, all of which may aggravate vata characteristics and contribute to irrational thinking or fantasies. Avoid anxiety about the outcome of your transformative experiences.

Don't discuss your subjective experiences with anyone except your guru or a qualified mentor. Avoid allowing your awareness to become confined and restricted because of preoccupation with yourself.

There is no need to fear the awakening of your own energies. Live a balanced life and let natural spiritual growth occur. During the fifty years (as of this writing) that I have practiced yoga, traveled to many countries, and interacted with thousands of people, I have never met anyone who experienced severe physical discomfort or disabling psychological problems which were caused by kundalini energies.

The few people I have met (or heard about) who attributed their physical, mental, or emotional discomfort to kundalini awakening were misinformed when reading a book or magazine article, someone incorrectly advised them, or they were inclined to fantasize. Talking with or reading the writings of people who know little or nothing about these matters is an unreliable way to acquire accurate information. Neither is it useful to participate in workshops or seminars which are persuasively promoted as opportunities to experience kundalini awakening or enlightenment. (Think about it: Do you know anyone who has experienced long-term, authentic spiritual growth because of such participation?)

In this kriya yoga tradition, extreme effort is never applied to awaken or work with kundalini energies. The most useful approach is to adopt lifestyle regimens and spiritual practices that can prepare the mind and body to be receptive, and to gen-

tly coax dormant forces to become active. They will then move and circulate as determined by the intelligence which is innate to them.

Clarity of awareness and feelings of lightness and exhilaration that may be experienced are normal. Uncontrolled laughter, crying, or other symptoms of emotional catharsis, should not be dramatized. Convulsive trembling, muscle twitching, or other erratic movements of the body should be avoided.

If flows of energy seem to be too dynamic, inhale deeply, then exhale and relax. Encourage them to flow deeply within rather than allow physical or emotional reactions to occur.

Kundalini energies can be regulated by gentle application of will power or intention. Allow them to perform their transformative work. Avoid thinking that because you are aware of energy flows you should direct them to others in an endeavor to heal or help them. First help yourself to Self-realization. You will then be able to know how best to help others.

Visions, perceptions of brilliant light, a sense of the oneness of life and of having transcended the boundaries of space and time, feelings of love and compassion for all living things, and extreme joy may be experienced when the upward flowing currents of kundalini energy stimulate certain brain centers. While such perceptions can be enjoyable and attractive, it should be remembered that what is perceived is not what you are, nor is it the ultimate realization to have.

In the spine through which kundalini energies ascend are three channels, starting at the base chakra and going to the higher brain. The two outer channels have gross and subtle astral characteristics. The innermost channel, "the pathway of God," has fine causal characteristics. Meditators who are intent on Self- and God-discovery are advised to become aware of kundalini energies moving upward through this channel. Perceptions of mental and astral phenomena can then be more easily avoided.

During preliminary stages of meditation, when kundalini

energies enliven the chakras, their sounds and lights may be perceived. As life force ascends through the central channel in the spine, it may be perceived as a pleasurable sensation or as a mild electric current. It may ascend smoothly to the crown chakra or its flow may be blocked at one of the chakras. If a blockage is encountered, do not despair; it will eventually be removed. Hatha yoga and pranayama practice can be helpful, as can chiropractic adjustments. Cultivate devotion.

Your soul peace and clarity of awareness need not be determined by the actions of kundalini energies. If you do not feel their movements or experience their effects, you can still contemplate the truth of your being and the reality of God.

OVERCOMING THE THREE MAJOR OBSTACLES TO LIBERATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Yogic literature describes three obstacles which may interfere with the smooth flow of kundalini energies and frustrate the soul's urge to be fully awake. Described as "knots" or impediments which confine awareness, they are related to the base chakra, the fourth chakra, and the spiritual eye center:

1. Obstacle related to the base chakra. Strong attachment to the realm of nature, its objects and processes. This kind of attachment elicits desire for material things, sense pleasures, and to accomplish ego-driven goals. It keeps attention flowing outward, causes the mind to be restless, and interferes with meditative concentration.

This obstacle can be overcome by dispassionately relating to the realm of nature without mental or emotional attachment, and by regular practice of superconscious meditation.

2. Obstacle related to the fourth chakra. Attachment, which may be strong or weak, to sentimental feelings and thoughts, and to the urge to perform good deeds and be helpful to others which is

prompted by genuine compassion.

This obstacle can be overcome by selflessly rendering useful service when possible, purifying the ego-sense, and aspiring to awaken to more refined levels of Self- and God-realization.

3 Obstacle related to the spiritual eye chakra. Attachment, which may be obvious or subtle, to subjective perceptions (visions, ecstasy, pleasant moods) and exceptional abilities and powers of perception which may accompany preliminary stages of Self-realization.

This obstacle can be overcome by withdrawing attention from and transcending mental and astral phenomena and contemplating the field of pure existence-Being which is devoid of attributes.

For those whose practice is intensive and whose progress is fast, samadhi is near. For one who aspires to samadhi, progress is in accord with endeavors; whether mild, medium, or extremely intensive. Samadhi can be realized quickly by surrendering [self-consciousness] to [in] God.

– Patanjali's yoga-sutras 1:21–23

INITIATION AND COMMITMENT TO DISCIPLESHIP

> One whose innate knowledge and exceptional abilities are fully awakened comprehends the wholeness of God and all souls as units of God's consciousness. Thus comprehending, one completely abandons the illusion of existence separate from God. This unification of awareness with God is the ultimate aim [of every unenlightened soul]. – *Sri Yukteswar*

Commitment to discipleship (continued learning, constructive living, and right spiritual practice) is essential for every person who yearns to be fully awake in God.

Paramahansa Yogananda once said, "The possibilities for having new perceptions and experiences are endless."

A disciple asked, "Will such possibilities never end?"

Paramahsanaji replied, "Yes, when you experience endlessness [the absolute realization which permanently removes awareness from names and forms]."

To another disciple, who asked how he might know when he was Self-realized, Paramahansaji said, "You will know when you know."

Until enlightenment (clarified awareness with knowledge of the reality, categories, and processes of Consciousness) is complete and permanent, discipleship is necessary. When it is not possible to have the personal guidance of a teacher, one can adhere to ethical and moral principles, acquire knowledge from books and other reliable sources, and practice meditation.

The two major obstacles to learning and spiritual growth which must be renounced are flagrant egotism and a perverse mental attitude, both of which incline one to resist new, useful ideas and refuse to conform to ideal modes of thinking and behavior. If you are aware of tendencies to be egotistical or men-

tally perverse, pray for strength of character and cultivate humility. If you lack knowledge of how to live effectively and of higher realities, admit it to yourself and acquire that knowledge. If you are not yet living the way you know you should (and really want to), learn how, and do it.

This path is not for one who is neurotic or apathetic; it is for the sincere, healthy-minded, intentional devotee who ardently aspires to be fully awake, competent, and creatively functional, and who is one hundred percent dedicated to right living and spiritual growth. It is then easier to make right choices and to discard mental attitudes, beliefs and opinions, moods, behaviors, and relationships which are incompatible with the ideal of living for the highest good. Confusion, uncertainty, strong attachments to debilitating habits, immorality, dishonesty, deviousness, self-righteousness, pride, prejudice of any kind, provincialism, arrogance, emotional immaturity, selfishness, abject ignorance, laziness, and preference for fantasy rather than for valid knowledge make it difficult, if not impossible, to be successful on the discipleship path.

INITIATION, AND ADVANCED MEDITATION PRACTICES

In this kriya yoga tradition, an opportunity to be initiated is made available when the applicant is sufficiently prepared. The applicant should have at least a partial understanding of what God is; the true nature of the soul; the impersonal laws which determine the processes of causes and effects; how souls awaken through the stages of spiritual growth; and how to facilitate spiritual growth. The applicant should be living a wholesome life, be a regular meditator, and be sincere. Further, one should have respect for the tradition and the teacher of that tradition; be willing to learn and to practice what is learned; and have the intellectual capacity to learn and the functional capacity to apply what is learned.

Because the transmission of spiritual force is an essential

aspect of initiation, before initiating a new disciple, the teacher meditates to attune his or her awareness to the Infinite and the lineage of teachers of the kriya yoga tradition. The recommended lifestyle regimens are then reviewed and special meditation techniques are taught, which are easy to learn if one has been skillfully practicing the preliminary techniques.

Three techniques are taught at the first initiation: a method for encouraging the awakening of dormant energies in the lower chakras and improving awareness of the spine; a pranayama used to direct flows of life force through the spine and brain; a technique to be used to contemplate inner light and sound.

The new initiate is instructed to practice the pranayama routine fourteen times once or twice a day for several months. Permission may then be given to increase the number. When done correctly, this technique enables the meditator to feel pronounced flows of life force in the spine. Kriya yoga gurus teach that doing this quickens the devotee's spiritual evolution because of the greatly improved powers of meditative concentration that result and the rapid psychological and physical transformations that may occur. Attentive practice of this technique magnetizes the spine and brain, neutralizes the influence of the lunar and solar currents of life force in the body, enlivens and refines the nervous system, and clarifies the meditator's awareness.

After one or two years of regular practice of kriya pranayama and the supplemental techniques, more meditation methods may be learned. It is not useful to think that the advanced techniques must be learned quickly. The basic procedures taught when one is first initiated are more than adequate to enable one to become proficient in eliciting refined states of superconsciousness.

Although the pranayama technique that the new initiate learns is often referred to as kriya yoga practice, which it is, it is only one aspect of the complete system which includes right living regimens, practices to effect psychological transformation, study of higher realities, and surrender of the illusional sense of

selfhood in favor of awakening to Self-realization. Many devotees who practice these meditation methods on a regular schedule fail to experience spiritual growth because they erroneously think that the other kriya yoga practices are not as important.

Even though kriya meditation techniques are skillfully practiced, if one's lifestyle is not wholesome and constructive, if dysfunctional mental attitudes and behaviors have not been renounced, little or no progress will occur.

Teachers of this tradition say that daily circulation of life force through the vital centers in the spine and head produces beneficial changes in the brain that would otherwise require many years of normal evolution. Sunlight, fresh air, pure water, nutritious food, optimism and cheerfulness, mental calmness, emotional peace, environmental harmony, and good health allow the brain to be gradually refined. When these ideal conditions prevail, regular, right practice of kriya meditation techniques greatly accelerate the process.

Initiation is transformative and of real value when the applicant is fully prepared, commitment to discipleship is total, and instruction and spiritual energies are transmitted by a representative of this kriya yoga tradition who is qualified to do it. To be qualified to initiate others, one must be a Self-realized initiate-practitioner of kriya yoga or an authorized representative of a Self-realized guru of this tradition. If these conditions do not prevail, instruction is only the sharing of information and is of little value.

A person who is not fully prepared, who is not willing to commit to discipleship, should not ask to be initiated. Nor should initiation be requested merely because one is curious or has a faint hope that it might be helpful. Initiation is a "new beginning," a transitional event that marks the moment in time when the devotee renounces ordinary ideas and habits, acquires higher knowledge, firmly resolves to live with conscious intention, and is empowered to do so.

While respect for one's teacher and the lineage of teachers is essential for a kriya yoga initiate, it is not recommended that they be worshipped. Paramahansaji said, "I am not the guru. God is the guru; I am God's servant." Inwardly aware of his relationship with God and willing to outwardly play the role of being a guru for the benefit of others, he always directed a disciple's attention and devotion to the Source.

Occasionally, a person who was initiated by a representative of Paramahansa Yogananda's organization or a former minister of the organization, informs me that Paramahansaji is their guru. The common illusion (mistake in perception of the facts) which influences the thinking of many naive people is that they can have a meaningful relationship with a spiritual teacher whom they have never met, do not know, and who does not know them. It is unfortunate that many thousands of people indulge in this kind of fantasy.

On one occasion, my guru said, "After I am gone, some people will claim to be receiving messages from me or the other gurus. Do not believe them. Enlightened souls never speak through mediums."

Whether enlightened or unenlightened, disembodied souls do not speak through or to people in the mundane realm. Individuals who say that souls residing in subtle realms speak to or through them are either untruthful or deluded. The former should be avoided; the latter should, if possible, be educated.

If disembodied saints are not accessible, what are we to think about reports of positive response to prayers which are directed to them? Response to prayer is always from God; one's own concept of a saint may be a point-of-contact with God. If the reality of God cannot be apprehended, prayer directed to a name or form envisioned as being an aspect of God may enable the petitioner's awareness to partially merge with the omnipresent field of Con-

sciousness and be receptive to its supportive inclinations.

During my guru's lifetime, he privately ordained several disciples, authorized them to teach and initiate students, and said that some of them would have disciples. In 1951, he announced that James J. Lynn (a spiritually advanced disciple to whom he had given the monastic name Rajasi Janakananda) would be his spiritual representative as president of the organization.

After Paramahansji's transition, Mr. Lynn told some of his brother and sister disciples, "Master will always be our guru. There will never be another guru at the head of this organization." Although his humility and words reassured the disciples to whom he spoke, they did not accurately communicate the fact that, for the teachings and spiritual force of this kriya yoga tradition to continue to be enlivening and transformative, they must be transmitted through a lineage of empowered gurus.

When Paramahansa Yogananda ordained me, in 1951, with his hands on my head, he said, "Teach as I have taught. Heal as I have healed. Initiate devotees of God into kriya yoga."

A young male disciple, who witnessed my ordination, asked, "Sir, is Roy to give initiations?" Our guru's response was immediate and explicit: "You, also, should do it. The same God that is in me, is in you. What I have done, you should do."

Since then, almost all of Paramahansaji's disciples have passed from this world. Of the few who remain, I am his only guru-successor. A few disciples teach the philosophical principles and practices of kriya yoga. I speak for, serve, and represent the tradition. My guru told me to do it. It is my mission.

Enlightened teachers never claim to be exclusive custodians of liberating knowledge or the source of influential power that redeems souls. This knowledge, and God's grace, is for everyone who is receptive to it. God alone is the true guru (remover of delusions).

A kriya initiate whose affiliation with a traditional religion is meaningful need not forsake it. Vocational, marital, social,

cultural, and other secular circumstances are a matter of personal preference. Activities and relationships should be wholesome and constructive.

Kriya yoga teachers do not attempt to convert or persuade, nor do they accept money for spiritual instruction or initiation. Donations for charitable purposes may be accepted.

Initiates should maintain open communication with their teacher or the teacher's representative to ensure that they continue to have instruction and encouragement.

Shortly before his transition, Paramahansa Yogananda met with a few disciples to tell them how to serve truth seekers in the near and distant future. He said, "Many people who come to us study for two or three years, and we initiate them, think they have gotten from us all we have to offer. They go away to study something else or they lose interest in their practices. They then do not have the benefit of our support when they need it and we do not have the benefit of their company and their support for the work. For the past thirty years I have been very generous in making these teachings available. From now on, we must emphasize the unique value of initiation and the importance of sustained study and participation."

During more than four decades of teaching these principles and offering kriya yoga initiation in many countries of the world, I have also noticed that, of the many thousands of individuals whom I have instructed and initiated, only a few continue to practice. Many people who had good intentions when they began their participation either did not make a commitment to discipleship when they were initiated or they allowed their attention to be distracted.

The inclination to remain identified with conditioned states of mind and awareness and to allow ordinary self-conscious (egocentric) interests to determine one's life is influential until the urge to be spiritually awake prevails. This characteristic of the human condition was noted thousands of years ago by the

author of the Bhagavad Gita (7:3):

> One among a thousand strives for perfection. Of those who strive, and of those who are [somewhat] accomplished, rarely does even one know the truth.

Many people are spiritually impoverished because they do not consider spiritual growth to be as important as their other purposes. Restless and confused, influenced by subconscious conditionings and the opinions and behaviors of others, they use their energy and skills primarily to fulfill desires, satisfy physical and emotional needs, or acquire social status. Seldom do they enjoy an interlude of silence or use even a small portion of their intellectual ability to discover their true nature and their relationship to the Infinite.

A disciple who is committed to spiritual growth awakens from sleep with thoughts of God and starts each day with meditation. Thus firmly established in God-awareness, life is lived with conscious intention. Thinking is rational. Choices are wise. Perceptions are accurate. Emotions are controlled. Time and energy are used efficiently. Actions are appropriate and productive.

That intellect which knows when to act and when not to act, what is to be done and what is to be avoided, and what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, along with understanding of the causes of soul bondage and soul liberation, is pure.
– Bhagavad Gita 18:30

The Philosophy, Tradition & Practices of Kriya Yoga

Themes are requested by readers. Use the form provided with each issue to participate in this open forum. Share your thoughts and needs for the benefit of others who peruse these pages.

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1. I was recently initiated. What can do to sustain my aspiration on the kriya yoga path?

Immerse yourself in these teachings; live them. Regularly practice meditation. Use meditation techniques until thoughts are settled and your awareness is clear. Contemplate Om and the field of Consciousness from which it emerges.

It can also be helpful to annually renew your commitment to discipleship. On a calendar or in a private journal, mark the date and time when you were initiated. Each year, remember the occasion. Be thankful for the opportunity that was made available to you. Rededicate yourself to right living and spiritual practice. Examine your mental attitude, lifestyle, relationships, and major goals and purposes. Review the meditation techniques to be sure you are practicing them correctly and effectively. Review your meditation routine and, if necessary, improve it. Meditate a little longer than usual. Perform a charitable act.

2. You have mentioned the need for more meditation group leaders and for kriya initiates who can be trained to represent this work as teachers and initiators. What are the requirements?

Anyone whose life is orderly, is a practicing meditator, and who will follow the guidelines we provide (see issue number 11 of

Radiance) may facilitate a meditation group. No teaching or personal counseling is required (or recommended). It does not matter whether the meditation group is composed of one or two persons, or many. The important thing is to meet on a regular schedule and meditate together. Let me know if you want to start a meditation group.

Teachers must be kriya initiates, attuned to me and our work, and come to CSA headquarters for training. Initiators must be teachers trained by me whose meditation practice is proficient, who are one hundred percent dedicated, and will persist through the years.

Through the years, some of our teachers and ordained ministers started with high resolve, then would not accept instruction or guidance, disaffiliated from CSA because they wanted to teach "their" way, or became disinterested or distracted. This is one of the reasons why I discontinued the annual Teacher Training Program we used to offer. We will offer it next year from July 30 to August 4. Applications are being accepted now. (Classes for our meditation group leader will be offered during each of the week long retreats here next year.) Our teachers and initiators must understand that they are to represent this tradition which I represent. I am not interested in training anyone who wants to learn from me, who will then disaffiliate and follow their own "guidance."

During his lifetime, Paramahansa Yogananda did not attract many disciples who could be competent teachers. A teacher in this tradition must be humble, able to learn, and willing to adhere to our modes of teaching. Since I met my guru, fifty years ago, I have not deviated from this path, nor have I ever thought of doing anything other than what I do.

If you cannot facilitate a meditation group or be trained to be a teacher-representative of this is work, at least distribute our literature and books to interested people and financially support this work. Our mission is to reach out to, and serve and encour-

age, individuals who are sincerely interested in effective living and authentic spiritual growth.

The majority of the "truth seekers" in the world today are only superficially interested or they are not yet able to learn and practice what we have to offer. This is obvious when observing the growing trend toward the popularization of yoga teachings for the purpose of making them acceptable to a broad segment of society. Many of the advertisements which feature yoga classes announce themes such as "yoga for health," yoga for weight loss," "armchair yoga," "power yoga," "kundalini yoga," and "tantra yoga," to mention but a few, as well as the word "yoga" appended to names of teachers and teaching systems. There is even a movement, among the leaders of some hatha yoga groups, to have laws passed that would require a yoga teacher to be "certified" by local or state governments. Some organizations are promoting the foolish ideas that, in our Era, yoga needs to be reinvented and that gurus are not necessary. None of the above-mentioned activities concerns us because we adhere to the sensible, ancient, ever-new tradition of transmitting the teachings directly to individuals who are prepared and receptive.

Regarding kriya initiation: From now on, I will only initiate a person who is a member of CSA and will make a commitment to discipleship training. As Paramahansaji did, I have initiated many people who seemed interested without asking them to make a commitment, hoping that as they experienced the benefits of practice they would become dedicated on the path. I will continue to present public programs for all who are interested in learning the basic principles and practices, but will only initiate those who are certain that this is the path for them. In two more years I will have been on the planet for 70 years. While I enthusiastically look forward to several more decades of ministry service, I will use my time and focus my endeavors to serve sincere truth seekers more efficiently and effectively. To serve our members and the new members in the future, I am now completing a

new workbook titled *Seven Lessons in Conscious Living: A Progressive Program of Higher Learning and Spiritual Practice in the Kriya Yoga Tradition*. Lifestyle guidelines and all of the basic meditation techniques are included. This will be published in January or February (perhaps sooner, as I am editing the manuscript now). Also, next year, we will launch a major, global outreach program, along with other useful projects.

3. I have read that recent research indicates that some perceptions which are reported by meditators (light, feelings of deep peace, bliss, overwhelming love and compassion, and the absence of boundaries—which results in perception of the underlying oneness of everyone and everything) are related to the stimulation of certain brain centers.

Yes, the phenomena you describe is produced by the brain and mind. When attention is directed to the spiritual eye (in the front region of the brain), life forces are encouraged to flow upward to the brain, the nervous system is unstressed, and centers in the brain are stimulated. The various perceptions that result can be used to attract the meditator's attention inward and focus it. However, one should remain alert to discern the difference between one's being and that which is observed. Many devotees err in thinking themselves to be spiritually advanced because of having subjective perceptions. I have known many people who say they have visions and experience sensations of overwhelming love and compassion when they meditate, yet experience no useful psychological transformation, unfoldment of innate knowledge, or improvement in ability to function effectively.

In Patanjali's yoga-sutras (4th chapter, verses 27, 28, *The Path of Light*), it is recommended that one should dismiss and renounce these "illusions and fantasies" which are obstacles to liberation of consciousness. This is not always easy to do because they are often so attractive.

Any subjective perception which fascinates the meditator's

attention can be used to focus concentration, then should be transcended. One should always inquire: Is there something else I should perceive and experience? That "something" is pure consciousness which is not dependent upon objects of perception, regardless of how interesting they may be or how enjoyable they are to experience. When Paramahansa Yogananda told me (in 1950) that "many saints do not aspire to liberation of consciousness because they prefer to enjoy the bliss of God-communion," he was referring to their choice of being preoccupied with such perceptions. Many devotees do not know the difference between what is seen and the one who sees, between what is experienced and the one who has the experience. Or their desire for liberation of consciousness is allowed to be thwarted because of the enjoyment that subjective perceptions provide.

The three constituent attributes of nature (*gunas*) bind the soul to the mind and body. Tamas guna causes one to be indolent and ignorant. Rajas guna causes one to be excessively involved with sensory stimulation and cravings. Sattva guna causes one to be attached to enjoyment, including the refined enjoyment of beauty, music, literature, nature, wholesome relationships, and subjective meditative perceptions. A kriya yoga devotee is not asked to withdraw from life, nor to refuse to enjoy experiences; it is recommended that a devotee remain attentive and discerning so as not to become overly involved with or confused by what is observed or experienced.

Reading words of truth and daily practice of meditation for the purpose of being Self- and God-realized will enable a devotee to live knowledgeably.

Kriya yoga is practiced to weaken and remove all obstacles to the accomplishment of God-Realization. The restricting influences which contribute to pain and suffering and interfere with God realization are egoism, attachments, aversions, and confusion about the processes of birth and death.

– *Patanjali's yoga-sutras 2:2.3*

Addendum

Look ahead to year 2000, and beyond. In a personal notebook or journal, write what you plan to do and accomplish. Be specific. If you need to improve your lifestyle regimens, do so. If you need to come to terms with events of the past and be rid of the burden, do so. If your meditation practice routine needs to be more regular and intentional, make the necessary changes now.

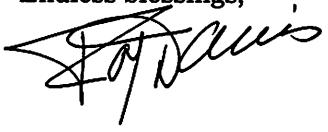
Attend to essential matters and disregard nonessential matters. Remember the words of Lahiri Mahasaya, to his disciples, "Keeping on, keeping on; one day, behold!, the divine purpose is accomplished."

Come to a retreat program here next year, if you can. When you are here, withdrawn from ordinary duties and relationships, rest more than usual and meditate deeply. As a kriya initiate, keep the ideal of being liberated in this incarnation foremost in your mind. It is all right to enjoy the company of devotees on the path and to enjoy doing the things you do. More important than enjoyment of spiritual companionship and activities is your full Self- and God-realization. The key to being Self- and God-realized is to dismiss from your mind and awareness the ideas and feelings which are contrary to it. There is no need to struggle to overcome such thoughts and feelings; just let them go. So long as the thought "I must overcome" prevails, the idea, and circumstances, of limitation will exist.

Stay focused on your ultimate aim in life rather than choose to live semiconsciously in a dreamlike state; be awake—alert, attentive, and purposeful.

When talking with disciples, my guru would say, " I want you to be as strong as I am." The guru's purpose is to remind others of the possibility they have to be spiritually awake.

Endless blessings,



Year 2000 Meditation Retreats at CSA Headquarters
Programs are Always on a Donation Basis

Self-Transformation Program

For CSA members only. Private retreats for one, two, or three weeks in an ashram environment. Monday through Friday: May 14 – 19; May 21 – 26; May 28 – June 2. Arrive on Saturday or Sunday if convenient for you. Single rooms assigned for privacy. Meditation and instruction 6 to 8 a.m. Meditation 3 to 4 p.m. Kriya initiation offered each week. One and a half hours work-service on the property. Participants prepare their own meals in the guest house kitchens. Free time used for private study, meditation, and reflection. If you want to participate, let us know the dates you prefer.

Our Regular Meditation Retreats for Everyone

Vegetarian meals served. Guest house rooms, double occupancy. Reservations required.

Week Long: June 4–9; July 2–7; July 30–August 4; August 13–18
Kriya initiation on Thursday evenings for prepared applicants.

Weekend: June 24,25; July 22,23; September 2,3

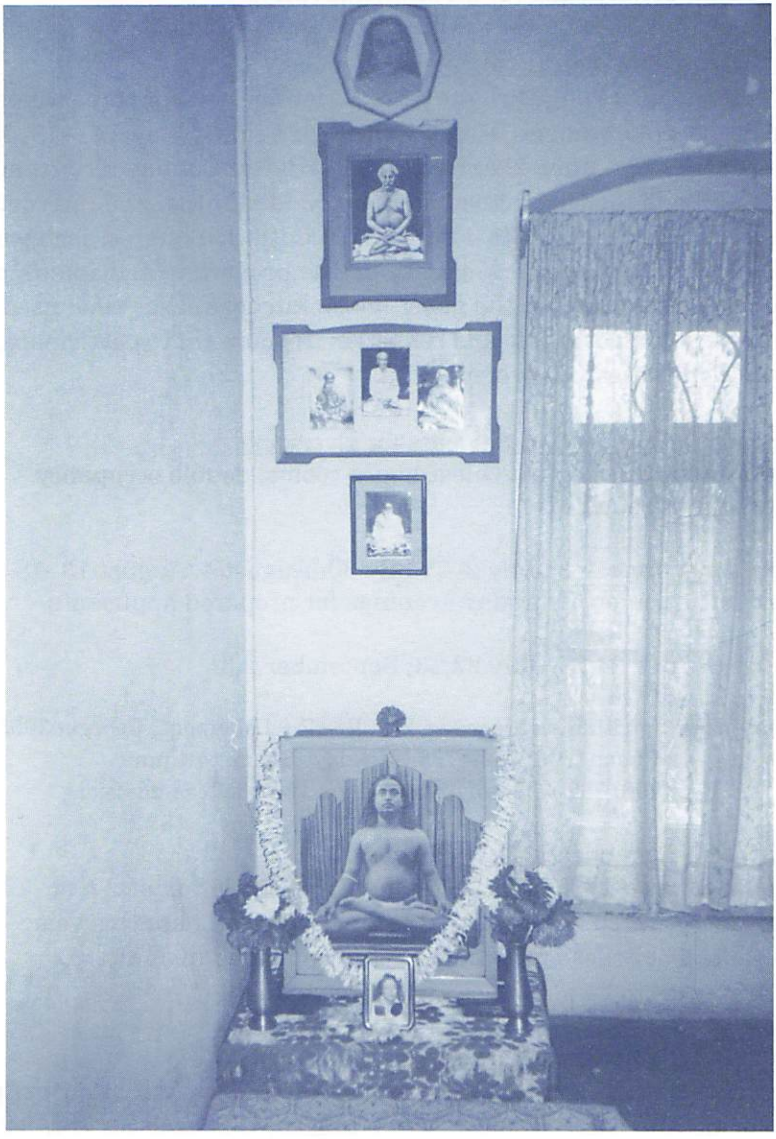
Center For Spiritual Awareness • P.O. Box 7 • Lakemont, Georgia 30552
Phone (706) 782-4723 weekdays 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Fax (706) 782-4560 anytime. E-mail csainc@csa-davis.org

Meditation Seminars in Other Cities

Dallas, March 18, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Kriya initiation at 2 p.m.
San Jose, March 25. Initiation will not be given here this year.
Details about these programs will be published in January.
Other cities to be announced when scheduled.

Meditation Seminar in Germany

Near Munich: Saturday, Sunday, April 29,30. Kriya initiation on April 30. For details: Harald and Marlies Reiske, Görlitzer Str. 14, 94036 Passau. Tel: 0851-54283. Fax 0851-7561360.



The small room on the top floor of the Paramahansa Yogananda's boyhood home in Calcutta, India, where he meditated during his early teenage years. The house is now a pilgrimage site for kriya devotees.

Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates

January – March 2000 Number 23

The Eternal Way / 3

WHAT IS YOUR HIGHEST AIM?

Devotees who do not awaken to Self-realization remain confined to ordinary states of awareness and to circumstances which correspond to them because they have chosen to be spiritually ignorant and limited instead of enlightened (knowledgeable) and free.

Dialogue / 8

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

Reader participation invited.

Addendum / 20

Service Opportunities
Seminar and Retreat Schedules

Four types of virtuous people worship me [Supreme Consciousness]: those who are distressed; those who desire material wealth; those who desire [higher] knowledge; and the wisdom-impelled devotee.

– *Bhagavad Gita 7:16*

As long as causes exist, their effects may contribute to either pleasure or pain. Pleasure and pain, or joy or sorrow, can result from the effects of destructive or constructive causes. Because of latent impressions [in the mind and body] yet to be influential and the actions of the constituent attributes of cosmic forces in nature, the possibility of pain exists even in the midst of pleasurable circumstances. Pain and suffering which has not yet been experienced is to be avoided. – *Patanjali's yoga-sutras 2: 13, 16*

In God, I put my trust. – *The Book of Psalms 11: 1*

From the depths of slumber,
As I ascend the spiral stairway of wakefulness,
I whisper:
God! God! God!
God is the food, and when I break my fast
of nightly separation from Thee,
I taste Thee and mentally say:
God! God! God!
No matter where I go, the spotlight of my mind
Ever keeps turning on God;
And in the battle din of activity
My silent war cry is ever:
God! God! God!
When boisterous storms of trials shriek,
And when worries howl at me,
I drown their clamor, loudly chanting:
God! God! God!
When my mind weaves dreams
With threads of memories,
Then on that magic cloth I find embossed:
God! God! God!
Every night, in time of deepest sleep,
My peace dreams and calls, Joy! Joy! Joy!
And my joy comes singing evermore:
God! God! God!
In waking, eating, working, dreaming, sleeping,
Serving, meditating, chanting, divinely loving,
My soul constantly hums, unheard by any:
God! God! God!

– *Paramahansa Yogananda*

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WHAT IS YOUR HIGHEST AIM?

> I was long enslaved by the dreaded enemy (ignorance) which robbed me of my wealth of wisdom. But now, by God's grace and through my own excellent self-endeavor, I have attained wisdom. By Self-knowledge the shadow ego-sense has been expelled. Rid of the poverty of delusion, I remain supremely free. All that is worth knowing is known. All that is worth seeing has been seen. I have now attained *that* beyond which there is nothing to be attained. – *Yoga-Visista**

Not all people who are spiritually asleep have chosen their state of ignorance (lack of knowledge). Many of them are not even aware of the possibility of being other than they are. Devotees—individuals who have been informed about their true nature and how to apprehend and experience it—are different. If a devotee is not rapidly awakening through the stages of spiritual growth, the underlying cause is lack of will and aspiration supported by diligent endeavor.

- Are you aiming high? Or are you satisfied with mediocrity (below average [normal] performance and circumstances)?
- Is your spiritual progress slow, medium, or fast?
- Are you focused on the kriya yoga discipleship path?
- Is awakening to complete Self- and God-realization first on your list of purposes to accomplish?
- Are you primarily interested in: a) being problem-free and having a comfortable, ordinary life; b) having an abundance of material things; c) acquiring information about higher realities only for the purpose of satisfying your curiosity or to fulfill desires; d) being fully enlightened in this incarnation.

*The literary work known as *Yoga-Visista* (Visista's Yoga) is attributed to Valmikim (circa 10th century) who composed the Ramayana. It consists of an imagined dialogue between the teacher Visista and the disciple Rama.

Swami Sri Yukteswar and Paramahansa Yogananda
Calcutta, India, 1935

It is not necessary to deny yourself the basic needs you have. A devotee of God *should* be problem-free, comfortable, prosperous, and knowledgeable in order to live effectively. It is important, however, that spiritual growth not be neglected because of obsessive preoccupation with matters which relate only to physical and emotional well-being.

Kriya Yoga Practice Should Expand and Clarify Soul Awareness

The obvious results of attentive kriya yoga practice are clarification and expansion of soul awareness. If a devotee is frequently confused or habitually provincial (small-minded), kriya yoga is not being correctly practiced.

Correct kriya yoga practice includes modification of mental attitudes and personal behaviors, insightful analysis of cosmic and individualized Consciousness (God and soul), meditation to the stage of superconsciousness, and renunciation (letting go) of the illusional sense of selfhood. Wholeness (yoga) can then be realized. Weak or erratic attempts to regulate thoughts, emotions and behaviors are ineffective. Superficial study of the nature of Consciousness is of little value. Meditation practiced while being fixated on the mechanical practice of a technique or practiced only to create a pleasant mood does not elicit superconscious states. Inability or refusal to allow the ego to be purified and transcended prevents otherwise rightly motivated endeavors from being effective.

It is known that the majority of kriya initiates in America, Europe, India, and other countries are habituated to middle-class mental attitudes and behaviors. Though they are usually sincere, their habits of thinking and behavior tend to confine their awareness and determine their actions. For most of them, the major challenge is to acknowledge and outgrow their soul-restricting personality characteristics.

Devotees who are not willing or are unable to experience psy-

chological transformation tend to dramatize excessive emotional dependency in personal relationships and when thinking about or relating to God or to gurus (teachers). They often have difficulty when attempting to comprehend abstract philosophical concepts or the reality of states of awareness other than those with which they are familiar. A common trait is that of trying to adapt clarified states of awareness to their conditioned states: wanting to be Self-realized without having to change their opinions, viewpoints or behaviors. They usually prefer to believe rather than know, to take rather than give, to strive rather than attain, to hope rather than be accomplished, to make excuses rather than achieve, to follow rather than lead, and to be consoled by the supportive companionship of others whose psychological traits and personal behaviors are similar to their own.

At public gatherings Paramahansaji would sometimes say (with gentle humor), "We are all a little crazy [different from what is considered to be normal, infatuated with personal interests], but we don't always know it because we tend to associate with others who are like us."

Strong, sentimental attachment to habitual modes of feeling, thinking, and behaving is a major obstacle to spiritual growth. Unless a spontaneous, transformative conversion event occurs or one is resigned to the fact that beneficial change cannot be experienced without the surrendering of self- (egocentric) will along with its companion-characteristic, mental perversity, endeavors to nurture spiritual growth will be futile. The wise words of enlightened teachers will not be understood. Grace will not be able to nourish the soul. The devotee will wander through space and time, confused as though in a dream, dimly aware of the existence of a higher order of reality where peace, knowledge, and harmony prevails, yet unable to experience it.

Peruse the New Testament, the Bhagavad Gita, or other literary works in which conversations and behaviors of truth-knowers and people whose states of awareness are ordinary are portrayed. Notice the difference between what is taught and what

is misunderstood. Notice the resistance to learning and change, a common characteristic of people who are addicted to spiritual ignorance, unable to comprehend what is said, or unwilling to help themselves.

Read the Bhagavad Gita and Patanjali's yoga-sutras, the two basic texts* for all kriya yogis, on a regular schedule. Part one of the yoga-sutras describes how samadhi (superconscious states) may be accomplished. The basic practices of kriya yoga are described in part two. Saturate your mind and awareness with these teachings and live them to the best of your ability.

On one occasion my guru gave me instructions in regard to conducting classes at the Self-Realization Center in Phoenix. Emphasizing the importance of including a "long and deep" meditation practice session at each public gathering, he said, "Dye them in the wool of kriya yoga! They will have personal experience and benefits that will change their lives!"

Paramahansaji believed that while an organized endeavor to spread and perpetuate these teachings was necessary, the emphasis should be to help souls be Self- and God-realized. He often said, "A [spiritual] organization is the hive; God is the honey. Without the honey of God, the hive is without value."

Clear your mind of dogmatic theological ideas,
let in the fresh waters of divine perception.
– *Lahiri Mahasaya*

* *The Eternal Way*: The Inner meaning of the Bhagavad Gita. The yoga- sutras are published in *Life Surrendered in God* and *The Path of Light*.

Dialogue

The Philosophy, Tradition & Practices of Kriya Yoga

Themes are requested by readers. Please use the form provided with each issue to participate. Share your thoughts and needs for the benefit of others who peruse these pages.

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1. For several weeks after being initiated I was able to experience superconscious states when meditating. Now, I am seldom able to do so. Do you have any comments regarding this?

It is common for exceptional meditation perceptions to be experienced during the early stages of practice when interest is at a high level and a new rush of enthusiasm temporarily overwhelms and subdues subliminal tendencies. After a few weeks, or months, when one settles down and endeavors to integrate spiritual practices with daily duties and interactions with others, subliminal tendencies again become influential and attention wavers. With continued, patient practice, you will eventually be able to elicit superconscious states at will. There will also be a more obvious expansion of awareness which will enable you to comprehend the reality and depths of the wholeness of Consciousness. You are eternally in God. The unveiling of your intuition and clarification of awareness that allows this fact to be realized will progressively occur as you persist with your studies and spiritual practices.

Several of my brother disciples, whom I knew in the early 1950s, who experienced quick and sometimes dramatic results during the first several months of meditation practice, lost interest in the spiritual path or were distracted from it because of their lack of devotional ardor and self-discipline.

2. Have you chosen anyone to succeed you as a kriya yoga guru?

There are a few disciples in the United States and Europe who have been given permission to initiate on my behalf. Beyond that, I have not made any decisions in regard to successors. The right choices will be made when the times are right. Providence (divine direction) will ensure that ideal arrangements are made for the continued transmission of this kriya yoga tradition. Wanting to represent this tradition is not useful. What is required is humble willingness demonstrated by dedication to right living and spiritual practice.

3. Is it necessary to live near a guru to have an attunement with him or her? How do gurus attune themselves with us? Is physical contact necessary to transmit grace?

The most beneficial attunement is with God. Attunement with a guru's awareness is only a point of contact with God; physical proximity is not necessary. Nor is physical contact necessary for the transmission of blessings. A guru may establish a mental and spiritual connection with receptive disciples by thinking of them.

4. Have you considered reprinting some of your older books?

My currently available books represent what I want to communicate. We occasionally receive inquiries about out of print titles. The basic information in my earlier books is also in my current ones. A new publication, written during the past few months and now being recommended to everyone, is *Seven Lessons in Conscious Living*: a progressive program of higher learning and spiritual practice in the kriya yoga tradition. It is being distributed to our members and will be presented to all future members. Along with much useful information, many quotations from the writings and teachings of the gurus of this kriya yoga tradition are included.

5. When practicing yoni mudra, at which chakra should one concentrate attention when mentally chanting Om: the spiritual eye or the crown chakra?

In yoga texts, the supplemental meditation technique used after kriya pranayama practice is usually referred to as *yoni* (the pathway through which one is born) *mudra* (in this instance, a method of regulating flows of life force). Some yogis refer to it as *jyoti* (light) contemplation. It is practiced by drawing a current of life force upwards through the spine to the brain when inhaling, restraining the breath (not with force or strain), and mentally chanting Om while gazing into the spiritual eye between the eyebrows. Awareness is usually in the higher brain; attention is directed to the spiritual eye center. When it is necessary to resume breathing, one is advised to continue to gaze into the spiritual eye, exhale, let the breathing rhythm be restored to its normal flow, then repeat the process. This can be done two or three times. After doing the technique, disregard the breath and remain focused at the spiritual eye. Continue to mentally chant Om for a while, then listen to Om and merge awareness in it.

6. Does the ability to look into the future to determine the number of years one has left in this incarnation come with Self-realization? Are there ways to develop that ability?

When one is Self-realized (and before), glimpses of future possibilities can be perceived. The time of transition from the body is not predetermined. A variety of factors can be involved: karmic predisposition; genetic influences; the will to live versus the inclination to die; behaviors which contribute to health or to illness; and lifestyle circumstances, whether life-supportive or life-threatening.

Healthy, long physical life has value because it enables us to accomplish our purposes while we are alert and functional. Premature death of the body is a nuisance (a bothersome inconvenience) that interferes with our innate urge to live consciously

and purposefully. For the average person who is only partially aware, incidents of physical death (and possibly rebirth) are of little consequence; their awareness is dreamlike. For one who aspires to illumination of consciousness, transition from the body when work in this realm is completed is viewed as an interesting learning experience. Many yogis leave the body too soon because of neglecting to use the life-knowledge they have to maintain their health or because of disinterest.

Even when indications of possible physical demise are observed, new causes may be implemented to neutralize the effects of past actions and extend the duration of life in this realm. The best preparation for eventual transition from the body is right living and superconscious meditation practice. It is also helpful to understand that, until we awaken from all involvements with relative phenomena, we live in eternity. There is no spiritual value in departing from the body before awakening to Self- and God-realization.

7. What are the "yogoda" exercises which Paramahansaji taught to Mahatma Gandhi, as mentioned in *Autobiography of a Yogi*?

Before coming to America (in 1920) Paramahansaji devised an exercise routine for energizing the body, using mild tension and relaxation of muscles along with the visualizing of soul force flowing from the medulla oblongata at the base of the brain. See *Seven Lessons in Conscious Living* (chapter four) for instructions in how to practice. Yogoda Sat Sanga is the name of the Indian branch of Self-Realization Fellowship.

The word *yogoda*, innovated by Paramahansaji in 1915, was originally used as a name for his comprehensive health and physical development system shortly before he established a residential school for boys. *Sat* means "truth of being." Although the literal meaning of *sanga* is "attachment," the word is commonly used to refer to a social gathering. A *sat sanga* is a gathering of truth seekers. It is of interest to note that while the bringing

together of devotees for the purpose of mutual encouragement and meditation practice is often recommended, spiritually advanced yogis say that because awakening to Self-realization is an inner process, dependance upon social interaction is to be avoided. Excessive socialization distracts attention from important matters, contributes to restlessness, and dissipates vital forces. When Paramahansaji met with groups of devotees at small, informal gatherings or at larger public meetings, he always talked about God and the importance of right living and spiritual practice, led a guided meditation session, and advised everyone to maintain their meditative peace when they departed.

8. How can a kriya initiate estimate the approximate number of years it will take to become Self-realized provided that the prescribed number of pranayamas are regularly practiced?

There is no way to know when one will be Self-realized. I have known of kriya yogis who (they said) had practiced more than a million kriya pranayamas, who were not Self-realized. Other devotees have awakened quickly, with or without knowledge of these meditation techniques. Kriya pranayama, correctly practiced, refines the nervous system and enables superconscious states to more easily be experienced. Right use of meditation techniques does not cause Self-realization; the effects of practice restore awareness to wholeness. While practice of kriya pranayama causes constructive changes to occur in the body and weakens the influences of subliminal tendencies, to obtain optimum benefits, sit in the deep silence after practice, then retain your meditation-produced calmness when not meditating. By self-training, learn to always be established in soul- and God-awareness.

9. According to Paramahansa Yogananda (*Autobiography of a Yogi*, chapter 26, The Science of Kriya Yoga), the six lower chakras (the spiritual eye and five centers in the spine) are said to correspond to the twelve signs of the zodiac. What are the specific relationships and their sig-

nificance? As I understand the teaching, the spiritual eye is related to the real Self; the medulla oblongata is related to the ego which is to be dissolved into the spiritual eye center.

I do not know of any specific relationship or significance in regard to the theory of correspondence of the chakras to the zodiac. The statement may be symbolic. I will look into this matter and write about it later if I discover valid information.

It can sometimes be observed that ego-fixated people often have their awareness centered at the base of the skull. This can be noted by the way they tilt their head slightly upward, possibly indicating arrogance and resistance to new ideas. When awareness is focused in the spiritual eye, egotism (an exaggerated sense of self-importance) tends to diminish. Some devotees experience a degree of confusion and disorientation when ego-identity becomes weak before they are established in Self-awareness (which is why they may cling so tenaciously to it).

10. What is the purpose of sexual relations? How can sex urges (and energies) be regulated and transmuted?

According to the design of nature, sex is primarily for the purpose of procreation. Only human beings and a few other creatures use sexual intercourse to establish and maintain a relationship or to gratify the senses at times other than when the urge to reproduce is present. Because the sex urge is often compelling, many people are confused and distressed by it. When one is healthy, periodic sexual arousal is natural. Desire for (and to have) an affectionate sexual relationship is not incompatible with aspiration to spiritual growth, nor is spiritual growth inhibited by having such a relationship.

Preoccupation with sex-related thoughts and activities can, like any other obsession, result in a waste of time, energy, and even material resources. When necessary, urges and energies can be transmuted by avoiding fantasies, thinking constructively,

directing attention and feelings into the higher chakras (from the heart center to the spiritual eye), and engaging attention and actions on the performance of duties and spiritual practices. Masturbation is not a recommended alternative because of the absence of emotional satisfaction and of interactions of male and female energies that occur between compatible couples.

It is best to come to terms with our sexuality and to cultivate understanding that eliminates thoughts and feelings of guilt or shame in regard to what is natural. If one chooses to be celibate, and is satisfied with that decision, there should be no thoughts of pride or superiority. Forceful attempts to suppress natural urges do not contribute to mental or emotional health or to spiritual growth.

There is an aspect of sexuality that is little known: that of vitalization and regeneration. According to ayurvedic theory, food transformation progresses through eight stages: plasma; blood; muscle; fat; bone; bone marrow; reproductive essences; and refined energy (*ojas*) that strengthens the body's immune system, imparts the glow of health, nourishes the brain and nervous system, energizes the mind, and clarifies awareness.

Excessive use of any of the senses is detrimental to physical, mental, and emotional health. It dissipates vital forces, causes attention to be too outwardly directed and fragmented, and results in restlessness and dissatisfaction. Repression can cause psychological conflict, mental confusion, and physical distress. Prudent regulation of desires, sensory impulses, and actions nurtures health, contributes to effective living, and confers peace of mind and soul contentment.

11. What is the specific definition of the word *ashram*?

The word is derived from Sanskrit *shrama*, to exert. An ashram is a place, usually quiet and secluded, where people can go to apply themselves to higher learning and spiritual practice. *Ashrams* are also the four stages of life through which to progress.

1) Acquiring a well-rounded education when young (including knowledge of spiritual realities). 2) Fulfilling family and social duties and obligations during early adulthood and middle age. 3) Retirement from unnecessary secular involvements after duties and obligations have been fulfilled. 4) Withdrawal from secular activities and relationships to concentrate exclusively on becoming established in Self- and God-realization before departing from this world.

12. Is there historical evidence of Krishna who is revered by many people as a God-realized soul?

Very little. According to scholars, several "Krishnas" are mentioned in various texts written over a period of several hundred years, starting perhaps as early as 800 B.C.E., and two distinct story-traditions can be discerned. 1) A Vasudeva-Krishna, a warrior-prince who helps the Pandava brothers in a war against their cousins (see the introduction to the Bhavagad Gita in *The Eternal Way* or in *The Path of Light)* is portrayed as an incarnation of the qualities of the aspect of God which restores and preserves the cosmic order and who teaches a syncretistic (reconciliation of various beliefs) path of devotion and yoga practice. 2) A cowherd (Gopala) Krishna who as a child is mischievous, plays a flute to attract and innocently flirt with the young cowherd girls (gopis), and eventually chooses one of them (Radha) to be his wife. Most of the stories are symbolic, and describe a variety of interactions between Spirit and the field of nature.

In the epic Mahabharata ("great story of the descendents of Bharata") of which the Bhagavad Gita is a part, Krishna is described by the author Vyasa ("the Arranger") as an avatar, an embodiment of divine qualities, who appears on the scene to restore virtue to the world. His words, spoken to Arjuna, represent the wisdom of the soul that is being Self-revealed.

Accounts of the young cowherd version of Krishna also emphasize his divine characteristics. In one story, when his

mother made him open his mouth to see if he had been eating the butter she had recently churned, she saw instead endless space in which the cosmos was floating.

In 1950, just after Paramahansaji assisted me to see a brilliant white light and a dark blue field in the spiritual eye center, he said, "What you saw a moment ago represents Krishna and Radha, Spirit and nature."

13. I'm frustrated. As I look at the world, it seems to be purposeless. For billions of years, people and creatures have been born and died. Civilizations rise and fall. Much of what is of interest to most of my friends (who seem to be happy) is not important to me. I am asking myself, "What is the reason for it all?" "If nothing in this world is permanent, if everything is fated to eventually change or disappear, why should I endeavor to accomplish anything?"

The world will continue to exist whether you play a role in it or not—and you will continue to have a relationship with it until you awaken to the level of realization where you have no desire or need for it. Why not view the processes of life as a cosmic drama in which you can choose to cheerfully play a supporting role or sit on the sidelines? Since you cannot withdraw from participation, you might as well adapt by living effectively without mental or emotional attachments to what you do. Improve your knowledge and skills. Think in terms of being in the flow of life's rhythms. Think and act in ways which will be of real benefit to others and the planet. Instead of thinking about what you want to get from life, think about what you can do to give of yourself to life, then act decisively. Many people in ordinary awareness are superficially happy because they are not very conscious and are easily satisfied. The happiness of saints is authentic because, established in Self and God-knowledge, they have no illusions.

14. What is meant by lower and higher knowledge?

Lower knowledge is of the mundane realm and is essential to

have if we are to live here effectively. Higher knowledge is of matters which are not confined to this realm: the primary causes which produced the universe, the categories of cosmic manifestation, the truth about souls, the reality of God, and how to awaken through the stages of spiritual growth.

15. I have heard of people who travel to India hoping to contact Mahavatar Babaji, to no avail. What are your thoughts about this?

For the average person, endeavors to meet with Babaji are certain to fail. If one is not established in superconsciousness, there is no possibility of comprehending Babaji's state of God-realization. There is a reason why he remains in seclusion; he works on the inner planes and does not want to be bothered by spiritually immature devotees. Lahiri Mahasaya advised his disciples to attune themselves to Babaji's consciousness by meditating and merging their awareness in the spiritual eye. There is no need to travel to a distant land in an endeavor to obtain information about the spiritual path which is already available in books or from teachers of this tradition who are more readily accessible.

16. I was initiated a few years ago and am still having difficulty with the practice of kriya pranayama and the other procedures.

Keep your practice simple. When doing kriya pranayama, pull the current up through the spine, into the higher brain and spiritual eye with inhalation; let it flow down when you exhale. *Feel* it moving up and down. Also practice the "path of God" technique (sushumna breathing) described in some of my books and in *Seven Lessons in Conscious Living*. Read about kriya pranayama practice in my books to become more familiar with the process. Now and then, during the day when you are not meditating, *feel* your spine and spiritual eye. Be more inwardly aware and soul-centered. Think about and be aware of your relationship to the Infinite. As your understanding improves, so will your practice.

Gently persist until you are satisfied that you are practicing correctly. Sit in the deep silence after doing the pranayamas. If you need more instruction, request a cassette tape from our office. Free to our members who are initiates. If you are not a CSA member, send $5.00 for the tape and first class postage.

17. What are the requirements for your ministers?

A comprehensive understanding of the philosophy and practices of kriya yoga, successful completion of our teacher training program, and my assurance that one's motives and skills are adequate. Our ministers or teacher-representatives must be kriya initiates with three to five years of practice of meditation, have a close guru-disciple relationship with me, be of good moral character, be willing to learn and follow our guidelines, and be living their lives effectively. Not all of our ministers are lecturers or seminar presenters; some prefer to facilitate meditation groups and to be available for private instruction to individuals who want to improve their spiritual practice. (Meditation group leaders need not be ministers.)

18. I plan to visit CSA headquarters next year. While there, what should I do to obtain the most benefit from my retreat experience?

First, remember that the purpose of a retreat is physical, mental, and spiritual renewal. Rest more than usual during the first few days after your arrival. Participate in the daily schedule of programs. Exercise in moderation. Use your free time for quiet reflection, inspirational reading, and private meditation. Avoid unnecessary social interaction and excessive talking. Forget your secular concerns while you are here.

19. I am not as committed to kriya yoga practice as I would like to be. For several days, or even for a few weeks, I am focused, then I allow myself to be distracted or lazy.

Remember that "complete" kriya practice includes all that

you do from the moment you wake up in the morning to when you go to sleep at night. Monitor your thoughts, moods, and actions. Endeavor to think rationally and constructively. Be cheerful and optimistic. Perform actions skillfully. Read every day from some inspired source; especially the Bhagavad Gita and the yoga-sutras. Meditate regularly. Be soul-centered, not self- (personality) centered.

While engaged in activities and allowing your emotions to be wholesomely expressive, avoid unregulated emotionalism and compulsive behaviors. Cultivate mental and emotional peace to keep subliminal impulses controlled and pacified so that they cannot become overly influential. You will then be the master of your attention and states of awareness; a real kriya yogi. Memorize and comprehend the significance of the second sutra in part one of Patanjali's yoga-sutras: *yoga chitta vritti nirodha*: "*yoga* (wholeness) is experienced when the *vrittis* (fluctuations) in *chitta* (the individualized field of awareness) are controlled and restored (*nirodha*) to their nonactive state. When restless mental and emotional conditions cease, the kriya yogi's awareness is clarified. Self- and God-knowledge is then possible.

Addendum

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

If you know kriya yoga initiates who are not aware of *Radiance*, show them a copy and let them know they can subscribe. Anyone who has been initiated by me or by any representative of the gurus of our tradition is welcome to receive this magazine. New subscribers also receive available back issues free.

CSA members who are initiates receive *Radiance* free. If you are not a CSA member, please renew your subscription annually. A good time to do it is early each year.

If you live in or near one of the cities I will visit in March, contact our office and ask for extra copies of printed seminar announcements and posters to distribute in your area. Give them to friends and put them in bookstores, health food stores, and wherever they will be seen by people who are interested in spiritual growth. Be sure to let us know how many you can distribute.

If you are a CSA meditation group leader, teacher, or minister (or want to learn how to represent this work), participate in the training program in Lakemont this summer. You don't have to be "spiritually advanced" to share the light of kriya yoga with others; you only have to be willing and able to follow the guidelines which will be provided.

During the last half of the 19th century, kriya yoga practices were not widely publicized because the number of people who were capable of understanding this teaching was small. During the 20th century, my guru used every available means to let people know about this work. As we enter the 21st century, and the constructive influences of the currently manifesting ascending cycle become more pronounced, there will be a dramatic increase of interest. Good things happen when we are prepared for opportunities which are presented to us. It is not enough to want to share the good news of kriya yoga; we have to demonstrate its worth by living its principles.

We will be advertising more widely to let people who are willing to learn and to practice know about these teachings. We do not want to attract people who are superficially interested: we want to serve real devotees of God. We are now scheduling an ongoing advertising program in India, to inform truth seekers about our books which are distributed in that country by three publishers and looking into publicity contacts in South America, South Africa, and Asia. For the past two years we have been advertising in Great Britain and Australia. (*Note*: Readers in countries outside of the U.S., please let me know about magazines and publications suitable for advertising our services in your region of the world. Send me sample copies.)

We will soon need more workers at CSA headquarters: to be involved with the preparation, production, and distribution of books and literature; process the anticipated increase of mail; and maintain our facilities. In the field, more meditation group leaders and teachers are needed. For many years the work has progressed because of my personal endeavors, our small office staff, and a few field representatives. Now, we must expand our outreach and effectively serve more people.

Our emphasis is the spiritual education of individuals who are capable of comprehending the facts of life. We endeavor to provide accurate information about God and the means by which one can be Self-realized. We are not interested in offering what people might want; we are dedicated to offering what they need. Some organizations offer emotional support and devote their energies and resources to satisfying the physical and social needs of their members. While devotees of God need to be encouraged, if they are not motivated to experience real spiritual growth, nothing of lasting value will be accomplished. Only spiritual growth that culminates in complete soul liberation is of permanent value.

Much can be done when we work together. Because some of our projects will require funding, a dramatic increase of available money is needed for advertising, video production, and salaried workers. As a nonprofit organization, most of our financial support is in the form of donations received from our members and others who are benefited from our services. We purposely keep our book prices low. I receive no

royalties for books I write which are published by CSA Press. In most instances, publishers of my books in other countries are encouraged to keep their prices low and use surplus funds from book sales for advertising. Literature distribution is not viewed as a money-making venture; it is one of the services we provide.

We are gradually increasing the value of our Endowment Fund which will provide income for future needs. While we must, of course, plan wisely for the years ahead, now is the time to reach out to more people and serve them well. It would be helpful if some of our wealthy members (we have a few) would provide substantial sums of money for the expansion of this work.

Ten thousand copies of *Seven Lessons in Conscious Living* have been printed. Approximately 1,000 copies are being distributed to our members now and I envision that 9,000 copies will be presented to new members within the next two years. Request quantities of the printed brochure and application form to share with your spiritually inclined friends so they may have an opportunity to request a copy. Let us know how many you can immediately distribute. Write, fax, or e-mail your request. Procrastination (to delay in doing something) has been referred to as "the thief of time." Good intentions are praiseworthy; decisive actions are more beneficial.

Let us always decisively act with enthusiasm and a clear vision of meaningful purpose. Your participation will be welcomed.

The Spirit of God sustains every form and force in the universe; yet It is transcendental and aloof in the blissful, uncreated void beyond the worlds of vibratory phenomena. Those who awaken to Self-realization on earth live a similar twofold existence. Conscientiously performing their work on earth, they are immersed in an inward beatitude. – *Sri Yukteswar*

Meditation Seminars: North America, England, Germany

With Roy Eugene Davis. Techniques, routines, and a practice sessions. Lifestyle guidelines. Reservations not required unless noted. Please arrive early. Donation basis.

Dallas, Texas: Saturday, March 18, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Richardson Civic Center, 411 W. Arapaho Road, Richardson.

Phoenix, & Peoria, Arizona: Mon., Tues., March 20, 21, 7:30 p.m.
Phoenix: March 20 at Holiday Inn, 4321 North Central Avenue. Theme: "The Philosophy and Practices of Kriya Yoga." Peoria: March 21 at The Valley Church of Religious Science, 9745 West Peoria Avenue. Theme: "How to Practice Meditation for Personal Benefits and Spiritual Growth."

San Jose, California: Saturday, March 25, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Center for Spiritual Enlightenment, 1146 University Avenue. Also at the regular Sunday services, March 26, 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.

Edmonton, Canada: Saturday, Sunday, April 8, 9
Lecture and seminar. For information contact the sponsoring group: Yoga Association of Alberta, 11759 Groat Road, Edmonton, Alberta. T5M 3K6. E-mail yogaab@planet.eon.net

Munich, Germany: Saturday and Sunday, April 29, 30
Seminar all day Saturday. Initiation Sunday morning. In English and German. Contact: Harald and Marlies Reiske, Görlitzer Str. 14, 94036 Passau. Telephone 0851-54283. Fax 0851-7561360.

Meditation Retreats at CSA Headquarters, Reservations Required

Weekend: June 24, 25 • July 22, 23 • September 2, 3
Week Long: June 4 – 9 • July 2 – 7 • August 13 – 18

Training Program for CSA Meditation Group Leaders, Teachers, and Ministers. July 30 – August 4
Request an Application Form

By kriya [pranayama practice), the outgoing life force is not wasted and abused by the senses, but constrained to reunite with subtler spinal energies. By such reinforcement of life force, the meditator's body and brain cells are electrified with spiritual elixir [a substance with transmutative properties].

Sitting [passively] in the silence is an unscientific way of trying to separate the mind and the senses which are joined together by life force. Kriya pranayama, controlling the mind by controlling life force, is the easiest, most effective, and most scientific approach to the Infinite. – *Paramahansa Yogananda*

Creation is governed by laws. The ones which manifest in the outer universe are called natural laws. There are subtler laws which can be known only by practice of yoga [unification of awareness with the one field of consciousness]. The hidden spiritual realms also have their lawful principles of operation.
– *Sri Yukteswar*

Remember that you belong to no one, and no one belongs to you. Reflect that some day you will have to leave this world—so make the acquaintance of God now. Because of delusion [erroneous thinking] you perceive yourself as a physical body. Meditate unceasingly to realize your true, divine nature.
– *Lahiri Mahasaya*

Few people know that the realm of God includes all mundane fulfillments. The divine realm extends to the material plane, but the latter, being illusory, cannot include the essence of Reality. – *Mahavatar Babaji*

When awareness is clarified, the reality of the true Self is revealed. – *Patanjali's yoga-sutras 1:47*

Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates

April – June 2000 Number 24

The Eternal Way / 3

GUIDELINES TO DISCIPLESHIP

A kriya yoga initiate should be fully committed to learning and to self-responsible adherence to constructive mental attitudes and behaviors—to discipleship. To think about philosophical concepts or to practice meditation techniques while being inattentive to the other recommended practices will not result in rapid spiritual growth that illumines the mind and liberates the soul.

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Reader participation invited.

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Endowed with a pure intellect; with firm self-control; abandoning objects of the senses; casting off attraction and aversion; abiding in solitude; eating in moderation; controlling speech, body, and mind; ever devoted to yoga meditation; dispassionate; relinquishing egotism, forcefulness, pride, desire, anger, and attachments; remaining unselfish and tranquil, that devotee is fit for realization of Supreme Consciousness. – *Bhagavad Gita 18:51–53*

Refraining from harmful actions, actualizing constructive behaviors, a firm meditation posture, regulation and transformation of vital forces, internalized attention, concentration, meditation, and samadhi are the eight kinds of practice which enable the devotee to accomplish Self- and God-realization and liberation of consciousness. – *Yoga Sutras 2:29*

Samadhi*

By Paramahansa Yogananda

Not an unconscious state
Or mental chloroform without willful return,
Samadhi extends my conscious realm
Beyond the limits of the mortal frame
To farthest boundary of eternity
Where I, the Cosmic Sea,
Watch the little ego floating in Me.
The sparrow, each grain of sand, fall not without my sight.
All space floats like an iceberg in My mental sea.
Colossal Container, I, of all things made.
By deeper, longer, thirsty, guru-given meditation
Comes this celestial samadhi.
Mobile murmurs of atoms are heard,
The dark earth, mountains, vales, lo!, molten liquid!
Flowing seas change into vapors of nebulae!
Aum blows upon vapors, opening wondrously their veils,
Oceans stand revealed, shining electrons,
Till, at last sound of the cosmic drum,
Vanish the gross lights into eternal rays
Of all-pervading bliss.
From joy I came, for joy I live, in sacred joy I melt.

**Excerpted from the longer poem.*

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GUIDELINES TO DISCIPLESHIP

> Remember that you belong to no one, and no one belongs to you. Reflect that some day you will have to leave this world, so make the acquaintance of God now. It is only because of delusion [misperception of what is true] that you perceive yourself as a physical body. Meditate unceasingly to realize your real, divine nature. – *Lahiri Mahasaya*

disciple Latin *discipulus*, a student; from *discere*, to learn.

When you were initiated, you learned meditation methods and were encouraged to commit to the life-path of discipleship. Regular and skillful practice of the unique meditation techniques and routines can enable you to realize your true nature and your relationship to the Infinite. Equally important as attentive meditation practice is dedicated discipleship. A disciple on the spiritual path adheres to lifestyle regimens and practices advocated by representatives of a philosophical system or enlightenment tradition.

Some essentials of discipleship are:

- Humility. Characteristics of humbleness are respectful attitudes and behaviors in regard to others and to civil laws and the laws of nature, deferential acknowledgment of what is true, willingness to learn, and absence of arrogance (an exaggerated sense of self-importance). Arrogance is a symptom of egotism: attachment to one's illusional sense of selfhood.
- Continuous learning. For the duration of our involvement with the ever-changing realm of nature there will always be something new to discover. Until your Self- and God-realization is flawless, you will need to persist in right endeavors and be both receptive and responsive to the impulses of God's grace.
- Experimentation in adapting newly acquired knowledge and new states of awareness to ordinary circumstances to be able to live effectively. Skillful living is a beneficial spiritual practice that will enable

you to understand how the universe functions and to appropriately relate to and interact with it. You will then more easily experience the fulfillment of meaningful purposes—of aims and goals which have real value. Endeavors to accomplish *meaningless* purposes confine and distort awareness, create attachments to useless relationships, dissipate energies, increase problem-causing mental impressions (samskaras, subconscious conditionings), and restrict the unfoldment of soul qualities. The primary purpose of dedicated kriya yoga practice is to remove all mental and physical restrictions, thus allowing soul awareness to be restored wholeness.

- Willingness to grow to full emotional and spiritual maturity, demonstrated by rational thinking and self-responsible personal behaviors and constructive actions.
- Unwavering resolve to awaken to liberation of consciousness, permanent soul freedom beyond which there is nothing more to be accomplished.

It is only by living in accord with and being aware of the effects of the laws of life (the principles and processes that determine the relationships that occur between or among observable events) that they can be fully comprehended. It is for this reason that kriya yoga initiates must clearly understand that all of the recommended lifestyle regimens are important.

> Only that person who lives the [right] life will understand these teachings. – *Saying attributed to the Buddha*

> If you continue in my word [adhere to what you are taught], then you are my disciples indeed [in fact]; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
>
> – *New Testament / Gospel of St. John 8:31,32*

Complete practice of kriya yoga includes:

- Rational, constructive thinking.
- Mastery of emotions, desires, and sensory impulses.

- Compliant observance of moral and ethical guidelines.
- Adherence to lifestyle routines that nurture and support health and overall well-being.
- Purposeful, effective living.
- Study, analysis, and comprehension of metaphysical (beyond the physical) realities.
- Mental and spiritual attunement with the teachers of the tradition.
- Skillful meditation practice that clarifies awareness and elicits refined superconscious (samadhi) states that progress to Self-realization, cosmic consciousness, God-realization, and complete liberation of consciousness.
- Surrender (letting go) of the false, illusional sense of selfhood, to realize (apprehend and experience) the one field of unbounded Consciousness (God) of which souls are individualized units.

The kriya yoga practice of initiates who only read the literature and use the meditation techniques while being inattentive to the recommended lifestyle regimens is not really complete. They may then wonder why meditation practice is difficult or unproductive, psychological transformation is slow, personal circumstances are not always satisfying, or spiritual growth does not occur

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL MATURITY: THE ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR AUTHENTIC SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The thoughts you habitually think, your mental attitudes and emotional states, reactions to events, personal relationships, and actions are chosen by you. How you think and behave determines your existing circumstances and will, to a large extent, determine those you will experience in the near and distant future. If you want any aspect of your life to be improved, you have only to exercise your freedom of choice and decisively act in accord with your choices.

When you have been informed of the facts of life, do not pretend to be ignorant of them, nor deny your ability to think rationally and function skillfully. You are an individualized unit of one field of Consciousness expressing through a material mind and physical body. Your

primary purpose for being in this world is to awaken to conscious awareness of what you are in relationship to the wholeness of life. Knowing this, established in being, live effectively.

Choose to be emotionally mature. Assume responsibility for your thoughts, actions, and circumstances. Refuse to allow mental confusion, emotional unrest, or psychological conflicts to dominate your awareness. Don't let debilitating habits dissipate your vital forces, weaken your health, diminish your financial (or other) resources, mar worthwhile relationships, or interfere with the efficient accomplishment of your meaningful purposes.

Be optimistic, cheerful, and calmly energetic. Optimistic people are usually healthier, happier, more successful and live longer than people who are pessimistic.

Renounce useless or self-centered thoughts, feelings, desires, activities, and relationships. Simplify your life. Decide how much time and energy to devote to spiritual studies and practices, self-care routines, work, family and social interaction, and whatever else you consider to be of value.

If you work to earn money, manage it wisely. Do work that serves society and the planet. Use the value that money represents for what you want or need or want to do or accomplish. Save a portion of your income on a regular schedule and invest it wisely. Support, with money and your volunteer service, only those projects which are constructive and worthwhile. Learn to function skillfully in space and time without mental or emotional attachment to your actions or to their results. Live effectively in the world without being burdened by it. Matter is the energy of Consciousness manifested. The forms of energy change; the Source of energy does not change, nor is it diminished.

Cultivate only wholesome, life-enhancing thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and relationships. You need not be bound by the opinions of others. Whatever you do, or allow, that contributes to your total well-being and rapid spiritual growth is acceptable. Whatever diminishes your life or inhibits spiritual growth should be avoided.

Cultivate wholesome mental attitudes and emotions by an act of

will (decisive intention) and by constant Self-remembrance of your true nature in relationship to the Infinite. Nurture awareness of the presence of God within and around you. Assume and express the characteristics and qualities you want to have.

> Awareness is clarified by meditation on a chosen object of attention that is pleasing or agreeable. – *yoga-sutras 1:39*

> Mental, moral, and spiritual strength may be acquired by contemplation on friendliness, compassion, and other noble qualities. – *yoga-sutras 3:24*

It will be very helpful for you to have an understanding of your basic mind-body constitution as described in ayurvedic literature. You can then more easily adopt a lifestyle that will enable you to be healthy and functional and choose spiritual practices that will allow beneficial results to rapidly occur.

DISCERN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUR TRUE NATURE AND WHAT YOU OBSERVE

Your true nature is pure consciousness. If you habitually think or feel that you are other than pure consciousness, use your powers of discriminative intelligence and intuition to discern the difference between what you really are and the various thoughts, moods, and unclear states of awareness that may be perceived. You will then be able to dispassionately (without bias or emotion) observe them while remaining established in Self-awareness.

Acknowledge and affirm (declare to be true):

"I am not a physical body which was born, changes, and will eventually be discarded."

"I am not a mind which is subject to being modified."

"I am an immortal spiritual being, an individualized aspect of infinite Consciousness."

Pacify existing, troublesome subliminal (beneath the threshold of conscious awareness) impulses and tendencies (vasanas) which, if not regulated and purified, may cause mental restlessness and emotional disturbance. Harmful subliminal impulses modify awareness and interfere with endeavors to concentrate. Constructive subliminal impulses and tendencies can be allowed to be expressive until you are established in Self-realization and no longer need the support of their influences. Troublesome impulses can be regulated and pacified by: 1) resisting and neutralizing their actions; 2) constructive living; 3) meditation, regularly practiced to the stage of superconsciousness.

Never say (or feel) that you are powerless, that you cannot choose your thoughts, emotional states, and behaviors. Think rationally. Nurture emotional stability. Act wisely and decisively. Subliminal states will then be transformed as their destructive drives are weakened and neutralized and constructive influences are strengthened.

Any untrue beliefs or opinions that you may have are delusions. Mistaken or inaccurate perceptions of what has been observed in the past or is currently being observed are illusions. If you have any delusions or illusions, banish them immediately and avoid them in the future. The habit of believing without discrimination what is perceived by the senses—and the invalid opinions of others who are similarly conditioned—to be real is the cause of delusions which cause mental confusion and keep soul awareness confined. To remove delusions and avoid illusions:

- Choose to be knowledgeable and competent. You have the capacity to know what is true and to live skillfully and effectively.
- Improve your intellectual and intuitive powers of discernment.
- Insightfully examine ideas and opinions expressed by others to determine whether or not they are valid.
- Use your common sense.
- When you meditate, by a gentle act of will power and by using a meditation technique if necessary, detach and withdraw your attention from the senses and direct it inward to the spiritual eye and higher brain centers. Consciously doing this will remove your aware-

ness from environmental, sensory, and mental influences and enable you to experience your true nature. When subliminal impulses are subdued, awareness is clarified, and powers of discernment are no longer restricted, you will be able to recognize delusions and illusions and will not be inclined to harbor them. Your awareness will expand and your functional abilities will be vastly improved.

- Train yourself to be alert and attentive. Think rationally. Speak and otherwise communicate with specific intention. Be observant. Accurately perceive the truth (facts) of what you see, read, or hear. Avoid fantasy and unrealistic wishful thinking.

KEEP YOUR ATTENTION AND ACTIONS FOCUSED ON THE FOUR PRIMARY AIMS OF LIFE TO BE FULFILLED

Don't waste time, energy, or personal resources by indulging in passive daydreaming, whim-impelled behaviors, or useless social involvements. To efficiently accomplish your meaningful purposes and to experience rapid spiritual growth, devote your time and energy only to essentials; ignore nonessentials. Paramahansa Yogananda often reminded his disciples:

> There is a fundamental purpose for our lives. To recognize it, we must understand where life comes from and where it is going. We must look beyond our immediate goals to what we ultimately want to accomplish. We must consider life's highest potential for development.

What is *your* highest potential for development? What is the ultimate good unto which to aspire? To know the answers to these questions, do these four things:

- Do what you are best qualified to do in accord with your knowledge and abilities and in harmony with natural laws. Your knowledge and skills determine your role in life, your dharma or life-path.
- Learn to have your life-enhancing desires easily fulfilled. Use imagination, wisdom-guided intention, and your inherent and acquired

skills to accomplish your purposes. Train yourself to be receptive to the impulses of God's grace which are ever present within and around you.

- Learn to have your real needs fulfilled by the universe. You will always have the full support of cosmic forces when you live in harmony with natural laws.
- Aspire to and awaken to Self- and God-realization and complete liberation of consciousness in the present physical lifetime.

Dutifully adhering to your life path and having life-enhancing desires and real needs fulfilled will enable you to render service to others and the planet and to live without anxiety or undue effort. The ultimate aim of your life in this world is to awaken from ordinary, conditioned states of awareness to Self- and God-realization.

> Creation is governed by laws. The ones which manifest in the outer universe are called natural laws. There are subtler laws which can be known only by yoga [samadhi] practice. The spiritual realms also have their lawful principles of operation. – *Sri Yukteswar*

Upstairs living room of Paramahansa Yogananda's boyhood home in Calcutta, now a pilgrimage site for kriya devotees.

Dialogue

The Philosophy, Traditions & Practices of Kriya Yoga

Themes are requested by readers. Please use the form provided with each issue to participate. Share your thoughts and needs for the benefit of others who peruse these pages.

During kriya [pranayama] practice, if I breathe through my mouth I tend to yawn and air fills my lungs too rapidly. I can do it better when I inhale through the nose, keeping the mouth closed. Is this all right?

Breathing through the partially open mouth is often taught to novice practitioners to make it easier for them feel the inhaled air against the back of the throat, to create a suction effect in the spine. When you can feel the current moving in the spine, breathe through the nostrils. Yes, practicing kriya pranayama the way you are doing it is all right. Controlled breathing, whether through the mouth or the nostrils, will enable you to regulate the flow of air so that inhalation is neither too fast nor too slow. As your skill improves, the major focus and feeling will be in the spine as the current ascends and descends in accord with comfortable inhalation and exhalation. After kriya pranayama practice, meditate in the silence for a while, then practice jyoti mudra to contemplate inner light and sound (Om).

I have a moderate curvature of the spine and have not progressed with kriya pranayama practice as I would like. What can I do?

An upright, seated posture is recommended when meditating because it helps the meditator to remain alert and attentive and to avoid being too passive or going to sleep. When practicing kriya pranayama, the current of life force flows through subtle channels in the spine. A moderate curvature of the physical spine should not cause any difficulty. Just do the routine, then sit in the tranquil silence and contemplate (focus upon and become aware of) your pure-conscious nature and the reality of God.

Do you know anyone who has experienced kaya kalpa regimens for physical rejuvenation?

I have not met anyone who has experienced that process. (Note to readers: see page 33 in the glossary of *Seven Lessons in Conscious Living* for more information about kaya kalpa.)

Please elaborate on illusions.

Illusions result when what is thought about or perceived (seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted) is inaccurately or incompletely comprehended. We may then, quite innocently, presume that we know what is not yet fully known.

A story: Six blind men were provided an opportunity to acquire knowledge about a tame elephant by touching different parts of the animal's body. One, who felt the trunk, said, "Oh, it is like a large snake." Each of the others, having felt only the tail, a leg, the side, an ear, or a tusk, had different opinions. They believed that an elephant is like a small snake, a tree, the wall of a building, a tent flap, or a polished hardwood pole. Each of the six men acquired only partial knowledge of what an elephant is really like.

Like the men in the story, many people have illusions about what they perceive in this world. Illusions about God are common, and often promoted and defended.

Illusions always have an object—something that is observed—an idea or concept, or a perception of an external thing, event, or circumstance. Hallucinations, self-produced by a disordered or disturbed mind, are not related to a perceived object of attention.

You once wrote: "There is a level of awareness beyond God to be realized." Can you explain more fully?

First, we have to determine what we mean when using the word *God*. I wrote that statement after referring to God as the Godhead or Cosmic Soul, the first outward aspect of Supreme Consciousnes (absolute, unmodified Existence-Being) which, having manifested itself as the Cosmic Soul, is "beyond" it. The absolute aspect of Consciousness can be experienced but cannot be described because it has no modify-

ing attributes. The Cosmic Soul, that which is commonly thought of as being God, the first emanated aspect of Supreme Consciousness, has characteristics produced by the attributes of sattva, rajas, and tamas (which are produced by the polarities within the field of the Cosmic Soul) without which the universes could not be manifested and sustained.

After I leave this realm, I don't want to reincarnate. Life is too difficult here. How can I avoid a future physical incarnations?

When you are enlightened, it will not be difficult to live in this realm. You may, however, eventually decide to withdraw from it, or be required to do so when the body is no longer able to serve your needs. The way to avoid returning to the physical realm, if that is your choice, is to be consciously, spiritually awake without any this-world attachments or aversions. To always be established in Self-knowledge while dispassionately perceiving the realm of nature as a manifestation of cosmic forces is the way to avoid being limited or influenced by it.

How can I keep my mind and awareness more God-oriented?

Cultivate Self-remembrance by always being aware of the fact that you are an immortal spiritual being abiding in God. What we consider to be of most value is where our attention naturally flows.

On a few occasions, while meditating without thoughts being active, I experienced what seemed to be a void: "nothingness." This is not what I had hoped for. Is this what one should expect?

What some philosophical systems refer to as a void is awareness of pure being without any supportive perceptions. In the early stages of meditation practice, when thoughts are absent, one may experience a passive, yet still egocentric, state of awareness rather than a vivid superconscious, transcendent state. In either instance, the absence of thoughts, sensations, or perceptions may cause one to feel alone or isolated. In yoga literature, superconscious isolation (kavala) is described as the state of conscious, absolute aloneness beyond all attributes and qualities of relative conditions (conditions which have a relationship with something else). Thoughtlessness is not always

superconsciousness. When thoughts are absent during the waking state or the deep sleep state, ordinary self-consciousness may still prevail and awareness may still be blurred.

Some devotees expect superconscious states to be characterized by bliss, joy, or perceptions of light or other subtle phenomena. During preliminary superconsciousness, these perceptions may be had. One may also become attached to them because they are interesting or enjoyable. There is no harm in being interested in or enjoying what is perceived or experienced. It is helpful, however, to be willing to transcend even these states in order to experience the ultimate realization—the reality of pure existence-being devoid of modifying influences. When you become aware of the most refined level of superconsciousness, gently (without forcing the issue) inquire, "Is there anything more I should apprehend?" "What is beyond this level?" Continue, without specific expectations or preconceived notions, until you awaken to complete Self- and God-realization.

When looking into the spiritual eye, how is one to know what is the "real light" rather than light which is the result of brain stimulation?

Any light that is perceived is produced by something. When you close your eyes and look within, you may see brain-produced light. When the eyeballs are gently pressed with the fingers, stimulation of the visual centers in the brain may cause light to be seen. The light of the spiritual eye is produced by upward flowing life forces that converge at the medulla oblongata and are focused at the spiritual eye center. When you see it, flow your attention to it. Use the jyoti mudra technique to contemplate inner light, or be aware of inner light that may spontaneously manifest when you are meditating.

Meditative perceptions of inner light, mental and emotional calmness, and a sense of unification with a larger field of reality are not unlike those which have sometimes been reported by persons who have experienced a near-death episode. It is of interest to note that many people who have had such an experience say that it radically changed the way they view themselves, improved their relationships, and resulted in a meaningful sense of life-purpose. They often say that it

"made them a better person" and removed their fear of death and after-death states.

Some meditative perceptions and sensations are produced by the mind or brain. What you can perceive is not what you are. For this reason, a devotee intent on illumination of consciousness is advised to avoid attachments to subjective perceptions. Although perceptions of inner light and sound (or other subtle perceptions) can be used as objects of concentrated, meditative contemplation, they should eventually be transcended.

In the Christian tradition, God is said to be triune: to have three aspects. What is meant by this?

The aspect referred to as the "father" is pure existence-being. The aspect referred to as the "son" is the first emanation of the intelligence of God along with the vibrating power of God (Om) which manifests the field of primordial nature. The all-pervading intelligence of God regulates the processes of primordial nature and the universe that it produces. The "spirit" aspect is enlivening and influential. Primordial nature (Om, the expressive power of God with self-produced characteristics of space, time, and specialized cosmic forces) manifests as the various forms of objective nature. Because it produces and sustains the forms of objective nature, some devotees refer to it as a divine mother.

In the Vedic tradition, is the "Shiva" aspect of God that which enlightens souls?

The aspects of God referred to as Brahma, expansive; Vishnu, preservative; and Shiva, transformative and renewing, are other than the triune aspects of God as defined in the Christian tradition. The Brahma (God) aspect emanates universes. The Vishnu aspect maintains orderly cosmic processes. The Shiva aspect transforms (changes) so that renewal can occur. These aspects are not gods; they are God's influences. The Shiva aspect is sometimes thought of as pure, unmodified, absolute Consciousness. When a devotee chants *Om Namah Shivaya* ("I reverently acknowledge the one, supreme Reality"), it is that alone

to which attention and devotion is directed.

Meditative contemplation on Supreme Consciousness until the illusional sense of selfhood is dissolved results in enlightenment, clarification of awareness which allows innate Self-knowledge of one's true nature and the wholeness of Consciousness to be realized.

Why do some teachers recommend using mantras with breathing done opposite to the way one breathes when using the "hong-sau" mantra?

There are a variety of ways to use a meditation mantra. Avoid confusion. Use one in accord with your temperament and the results that you obtain. With either hong-sau ("saw"), ham-sa, or so-hum, mentally recite the first syllable when inhaling and the second syllable when exhaling. As you progress, instead of mentally reciting the mantra, mentally "listen" to it. When breathing is very refined and subtle and attention is internalized, disregard the mantra. Listen to Om without breath awareness.

If kundalini energies promote well-being, why do some teachers write (and talk) about the dangers of its premature awakening? Is true that some people have severe psychological problems because of premature awakened kundalini?

Kundalini energies that spontaneously awaken confer benefits: vitality, strengthening of the body's immune system; improved powers of concentration and of intelligence; mental illumination; and rapid spiritual awakening. One should not practice dynamic pranayamas or other forceful methods to try to force the arousal of kundalini energies. Mental, emotional, and physical health should first be cultivated. I have never met anyone whose symptoms of psychological or physical distress were related to the actions of the energies of kundalini, which are the soul's (your own) forces which freely circulate when obstacles which formerly confined them are removed. They can be encouraged to be expressive by aspiring to spiritual growth, nurturing good health, mental and emotional calmness, orderly living, devotional prayer, practice of kriya yoga meditation techniques, and association and mental and spiritual attunement with enlightened souls.

When initiating students, some kriya yoga gurus teach different ways of practicing the basic meditation techniques. Why?

During Lahiri Mahasaya's two-week stay with Babaji, in 1861, he was taught a variety of meditation techniques. Later, when he taught his own disciples, he did so in accord with their capacity to learn and to practice. Although the basic methods are the same for everyone, advanced practices may be adapted to individual needs. Now, more than a century after Lahiri Mahasaya's transition in 1895, kriya gurus either teach as they were taught by their gurus or adapt their instructions to best serve their disciples. If the kriya meditation techniques taught by a knowledgeable guru who is even somewhat spiritually enlightened are diligently practiced, they will be effective. A disciple should practice what the guru teaches rather than experiment with methods of other teachers.

According to what I have been told, and have read, yoga practice expands and clarifies the practitioner's awareness. Although I have been reading books on yoga and practicing various routines for several years, my awareness is not yet enlarged, nor is it very much clearer than when I started.

Expand your awareness by being aware of your true Self as a spiritual being expressing through a mind and body in the infinite field of Consciousness which has no boundaries. The only cause of confinement of awareness is excessive identification with the idea of being an entity independent of that field of Consciousness. Clarify your awareness by orderly, rational thinking and superconscious meditation practice. It is not uncommon for a truth seeker to become so preoccupied with metaphysical theories and practice of techniques and routines that they become more egocentric and small-minded instead of expansive, and introverted instead of Self-realized and cosmic conscious. Avoid preoccupation with ideas and practices. Acquire useful knowledge and apply the helpful procedures, then wisely live with enthusiasm. Use your improved understanding and skills to live effectively.

Liberation of consciousness: What determines whether it is temporary or permanent?

Soul liberation is of two kinds: 1) Self-realization that is not yet stable because of the existence of weakened subconscious tendencies which have not yet been completely neutralized or eliminated and the continuing influence of mild delusions or illusions; 2) Self-realization that is permanent because the mind and ego-sense are so completely purified that there is no possibility of reverting to former states of ordinary, conditioned awareness. The first kind is the soul-free state with some karmic conditions yet to be resolved. The second kind is the supremely free state of unqualified liberation of consciousness.

As I grow older, although I am not afraid of death, I do not understand the process. What is the best way to prepare for it?

The best way to prepare for eventual transition from the body is to improve your understanding of your real nature in relationship to the wholeness of life, appropriately fulfill all of your remaining duties and obligations, accomplish as much spiritual growth as you can while you are here, and meditate deeply on a regular schedule until you are firmly established in superconsciousness.

When understanding your true nature in relationship to the wholeness of life is improved, you then will know that transition from the body is merely another event to be experienced that will not be difficult or blur your awareness.

By fulfilling all of your duties and obligations, you will have no regrets or attachments to bind your awareness to the physical realm.

Spiritual growth will prepare you for what is to be experienced during and after the incident of transition.

Abiding in superconsciousness (transcendent samadhi) while meditating is a way of consciously "dying" in relationship to the world. After meditation, when attention is directed outward, it is like being reincarnated. In this way, many incarnations can be experienced in the present physical lifetime. Eventually, whether meditating or not, you will always be superconscious.

Is it ethical (right, proper) for a devotee of God to pray that desires be fulfilled? If it is, what is the most effective way to pray?

Until you are established in Self-realization and are always so in harmony with the rhythms of life that your desires and needs are spontaneously fulfilled, you can pray for what you want or need.

Pray until you know and feel that you already have what you wanted or needed. You may be inspired to do something that will assist the fulfillment process. If you don't know what to do, or cannot do anything to satisfy your desires or needs, rely on God and let events, resources, relationships (if necessary to the fulfillment process), and circumstances unfold naturally. The universe can and will provide for your needs when you are in harmony with it.

Don't beg, endeavor to bargain, or demand. Prepare to have your worthwhile, life-enhancing desires fulfilled. Improve your skills and abilities and use them effectively. Expect to have your needs satisfied. When they are, how will you think, feel, and act?

To function more effectively in the physical realm, as often as is necessary remind yourself that the universe, a manifestation of cosmic forces emanated from one field of Consciousness, is whole. Your mind is a unit of God's universal mind which is responsive to your thoughts, mental states, desires, and real needs.

Pray for physical healing, psychological transformation, peace of mind, attitude or behavioral modification, prosperity, success in constructive endeavors, or for improved personal relationships or circumstances. Above all, pray that you will grow spiritually and awaken to Self- and God-realization. Adjust your point of view until you can imagine, see, and feel (at the soul level) yourself as you want to be, then assume that point of view and live in accord with it.

For a dedicated practitioner of kriya yoga who aspires to rapid spiritual growth, which is more important or influential: personal endeavor, the help of the guru, or God's grace?

Everything that contributes to spiritual well-being is important. Right personal endeavors are necessary. A disciple should be emotionally mature, willing to assume responsibility for his or her thoughts,

feelings, and actions, and fully committed to doing what is necessary to undergo psychological transformation that removes all restrictions to spiritual growth.

If a disciple is receptive and responsive, the guru's instructions, enlightened consciousness, and transmission of spiritual force are helpful. A true guru will only advise a disciple to do that which is for the disciple's highest good. If the disciple resists, or does not put into practice what has been advised, nothing worthwhile will result.

On one occasion, to a disciple who behaved inappropriately, Paramahansa Yogananda said, "Why do you tell others that you are my disciple when you refuse to do what I tell you for your own good?"

My guru corrected my behavior two times. Six months after I met him, my early enthusiasm for spiritual practice waned somewhat when I became aware of the fact that much inner transformation was still needed. He put me back on the right course by writing me a brief note . "Roy," he wrote, "You are making yourself unhappy by playing the same old, negative record (my preoccupation with my thoughts) in your mind over and over. Why don't you just break the record?" (At that time, easily breakable phonograph records were still being used.)

Also, during my first year with Paramahansaji, in spite of being mindful of his instructions (that for the first year I should only read his books and a few others that he recommended, and devote most of time to spiritual practice and God-remembrance), I read a book about another Indian saint whom I knew my guru held in high regard. I soon noticed that my thoughts were preoccupied with that saint and what he had said and done and my meditations were not as deep and satisfying as they had been. When I next visited Paramahansaji in Los Angeles, he looked directly into my eyes and said, "There was a reason why I told you to read only certain books. In a year or two, when your discrimination is more developed, you can read anything and not be confused. Until then, you should do as I tell you."

By attunement to the guru's state of illumined consciousness, the disciple's mind can be cleansed and awareness can be clarified. When the disciple is receptive to the spiritual force flowing through the guru,

it can be transmitted. The disciple's spiritual forces are then quickened and begin to circulate more freely. I experienced the transmission of spiritual force from Paramahansaji after a few weeks of being with him. It occurred spontaneously. I could tell by the way he observed me and advised me in regard to my meditation practices that he was fully aware of what had occurred. He would sometimes say to disciples, "I give you everything; you have to be prepared to receive it."

God's grace (the enlivening impulses which are ever expressive in the omnipresent field of Consciousness, and us) supports us and our constructive endeavors even when we are not aware of its actions, causes our spiritual awakening, and makes liberation of our consciousness possible. When we have done all that we can do to assist ourselves to spiritual growth, when we have realized the most refined state of superconsciousness, we have only to surrender any remaining sense of illusional selfhood so that grace can restore our awareness to unflawed, conscious wholeness.

I have always been somewhat introverted, do not easily relate to others, and have not been very successful in achieving material goals. My personal needs are few and my interest in material things is minimal. I am inclined to be introspective and contemplative rather than outgoing.

The important matter is to know your life-path (dharma) and adhere to it. Although it will be helpful to be able to communicate effectively with others, it is not necessary to conform your life to the views and behaviors of others whose life-path differs from yours. It will also be helpful to improve your achievement skills—to live comfortably and accomplish worthwhile purposes.

Contemplate the real purpose of your life. Cultivate and express innate soul qualities. Nurture your spiritual growth. Be happy.

I like to read a variety of books, go to lectures and seminars, analyze and compare different philosophical concepts and discuss them with my friends, and experiment with different meditation methods. Should I do this?

You have the freedom to choose your actions and to experience their results. Answer your question by examining your thoughts, how you are living your life, and your personal relationships and circumstances.

Are you happy (at the soul level)? Do you have peace of mind? Are you emotionally stable? Are you living effectively? Are your personal relationships wholesome and harmonious? Are your circumstances entirely wholesome and supportive? Is your understanding of yourself and your relationship with God steadily improving? Is meditation practice enjoyable and productive? Are you satisfied with your spiritual growth? Honestly inquire into these matters and you will know what is best for you to do.

May I use creative imagination to nurture my spiritual growth?

Yes. Aspire to spiritual growth. Imagine what it will be like when you are enlightened: Self- and God-aware, with complete knowledge of your real nature and of cosmic processes. Imagine the freedom you will have, how you will see and experience the world and what you will do. Feel your vital forces freely circulating. See yourself as an immortal, spiritual being expressing in a vast field of conscious life that has no boundaries. Know that your thoughts are interacting with God's cosmic mind, that your actions are always appropriate, and that God's grace always supports you. When you meditate, do so with intention and keen interest. When you use imagination like this, you are not trying to make anything happen; you are making yourself receptive to what is possible for you to experience.

I was long enslaved by the great enemy, ignorance, which robbed me of my wealth of wisdom. But now, by God's grace and my own excellent self-endeavor, I have attained wisdom. By Self-knowledge the shadow of ego-sense has been removed. Rid of the poverty of delusion, I remain supremely free. All that is worth knowing is known. All that is worth seeing has been seen. I have now attained *that* beyond which there is nothing to be attained. – *Visista's-Yoga*

News and Information

The lead article in this issue of *Radiance* is from my first draft of chapter one of *A Guide to Kriya Yoga Practice* which I am now writing. It will be published this year by CSA Press as a companion book to *Seven Lessons in Conscious Living* and will only be offered to initiates.

If you are a CSA member and have not yet requested your free copy of *Seven Lessons in Conscious Living*, request it now. It has much useful information that will be of benefit to you. If you are not a CSA member, purchase a copy. Tell your spiritually inclined friends about this book. If you have friends who want to be initiated, tell them to prepare themselves by reading this book and practicing the meditation techniques and routines for six months to one year.

Request as many copies of our new color-illustrated book catalog brochure that you can immediately pass along to interested friends and associates. Request them by mail, telephone, fax, or e-mail.

We are now advertising five of our books published by Motilal Banarsidass (Delhi, India) in *Life Positive* magazine which is widely distributed in that country. The ads are published monthly. Readers of the magazine are advised to obtain the books from the Indian publisher and to contact our office for free literature.

Harald and Marlies Reiske, our representatives in Germany, recently translated and will soon publish *The Path of Light*. They also publish and distribute a German language newsletter, present classes and seminars in Passau, and make the arrangements for my seminars every two years.

If you live outside of the U.S., please note: Send me a sample copy of magazines or other publications in your country which have readers who would be interested in our literature. We want to advertise widely to reach out to potential kriya yoga devotees in other countries.

Meditation Seminars in Canada and Europe

Presented by Roy Eugene Davis

Edmonton, Canada: Saturday, Sunday, April 8, 9
Lecture and seminar. Contact the sponsoring group: Yoga Association of Alberta, 11759 Groat Road, Edmonton, Alberta. T5M 3K6. E-mail yogaab@planet.eon.net

Brighton, England: Saturday, April 22
From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Reservations: Mr. Richard Fish, Poplar Farm, Burtle, near Bridgwater, Somerset TA7 8NB. Telephone (01278) 723170. E-mail richardfish@lineone.net

Munich, Germany: Saturday and Sunday, April 29, 30
In English and German. Seminar, Saturday. Initiation Sunday morning. Contact: Harald and Marlies Reiske, Görlitzer Str. 14, 94036 Passau. Telephone 0851- 54283
Fax 0851-7561360.

Meditation Retreats at CSA Headquarters

Reservations required. See details in Truth Journal or Transcendence Newsletter

Weekends: June 24, 25 • July 22, 23 • September 2, 3
Week Long: June 4 - 9 • July 2 -7 • August 13 - 18

There is one eternal Life which animates everything in the universe—one wave of Life flowing through everything.

– *Paramahansa Yogananda*